PARTISAN REVIEW

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MARCH, 1948

DELMORE SCHWARTZ
The World is a Wedding

PAUL BOWLES
Under the Sky (a story)

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE
For Whom Does One Write?

ALEXANDER RASUMOVSKY
The Soviet Literary Purge

H. L. MENCKEN
Thousands of Words

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A Streetcar Named Success

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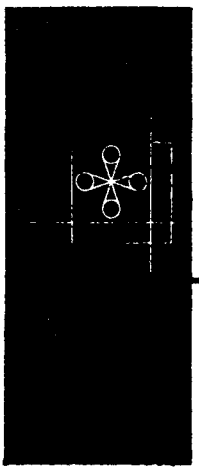

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A drawing from Georges Braque's notebooks.

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Delmore Schwartz

THE WORLD IS A WEDDING*

I: "WHAT DOES SHE HAVE THAT I DON'T HAVE?"

In this our life there are no beginnings but only departures entitled beginnings, wreathed in the formal emotions thought to be appropriate and often forced. Darkly rises each moment from the life which has been lived and which does not die, for each event lives in the heavy head forever, waiting to renew itself.

The circle of human beings united by need and love began with the graduation or departure of Rudyard Bell from school, just at the beginning of the great depression. Rudyard was the leader and captain of all hearts, and his sister Laura's apartment was the place where the circle came to full being. When Rudyard graduated, he decided to devote himself to the writing of plays. His aunt had suggested that he become a teacher in the public high school system until he had proven himself as a dramatist, but Rudyard rejected his aunt's suggestion. He said that to be a playwright was a noble and difficult profession to which one must give one's whole being. Laura Bell had taken care of her younger brother since he was four and she said then that Rudyard was a genius and ought not to be required to earn a living. Rudyard accepted his sister's attitude as natural and inevitable, such was his belief in himself and in his power to charm other human beings.

Thus, in a way, this refusal to become a teacher and to earn a living was the beginning of the circle.

The other boys who truly belonged to the circle were also caught in the midst of the great depression. Edmund Kish wanted to be a teacher of philosophy, but he was unable to get an appointment.

* These are the first two chapters of a novel, "The World Is a Wedding," which will be published shortly by New Directions.

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Jacob Cohen, recognized by all as the conscience or judge of the circle, wanted to be a reporter, but there were few jobs for newcomers. Ferdinand Harrap tried to be an author, but none of his stories were accepted, and he supported himself by directing a business agency. Francis French and Marcus Gross were teachers in the public high school system, although this was far from their ambition; Lloyd Tyler, known as "the boy," was still a student, and Laura made the most money as a buyer for a department store.

The circle was astonished when Rudyard's first long play was rejected by Broadway, for all had been certain that Rudyard would be famous and rich very soon. Rudyard had always been the one who won all the prizes in school and did everything best. Marcus Gross spoke fondly of the day, long ago and far away, when he had first encountered Rudyard in public school. It was the beginning of the new term and after the first hour Rudyard was regarded as a genius by the teacher and the pupils. So it had always been; Rudyard had been the infant prodigy, class orator, laureate, and best student. When Rudyard's plays were refused year after year by Broadway producers the circle was perplexed, for his dramatic works seemed to them delightful and profound when he read them aloud to the circle. Edmund Kish recognized the weakness of the plays, the fact that Rudyard used character and incident merely as springboards for excursions which were lyrical and philosophical, so that the essential impression was dreamlike, abstract, and didactic. But he liked the plays for just this reason, and his conversation about philosophy did much to make Rudyard concern himself with the lyrical expression of philosophical ideas.

Laura was disappointed and after a time she concealed her disappointment by speaking of her brother's plays as just trash. Yet she was patient with Rudyard, delighting in the circle as such and hoping that among the new young men whom Rudyard was always bringing to the house there would be one who would want to marry her.

After five years of the depression, the hopes of most of the boys of the circle had faded slowly like a color or were worn thin like a cloth. Their life as part of the circle was their true life, and their lower middle-class poverty kept them from seeking out girls and entertaining the idea of marriage. From time to time some of them became acquainted with girls and went out with them briefly, but

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since no one but Rudyard was doing what he wanted to be doing, marriage was as distant as a foreign country. Disdainful from the beginning of the conventional modes of behavior, their enjoyment of the life of the circle fortified and heightened their disdain.

When Laura began to doubt that she was going to get a husband, she began to drink, hiding the gin in the pantry when Rudyard tried to stop her. She drank on Saturday nights, the nights when the circle came to her house and was most itself, so that some of the boys spoke of "our Saturday nights." When she was really drunk, she became quarrelsome and voluble, and what she said was an incoherent but blunt utterance of the naked truth. The boys tried to seem indifferent to what she said, but the reason for her drunkenness was clear and painful. When the marriage of a boy or girl who had come to evenings of the circle was discussed, and when the news of an engagement became known, Laura cried out from the kitchen like Cassandra:

"What does she have that I don't have?" Laura uttered this question again and again during the evening, amid other and like remarks.

Laura insisted in vain that her question be answered, and sometimes she placed her hands on her breasts lightly, as if in estimation, although when sober she was ashamed of any mention of sexual desire. Each newcomer or visitor renewed her hope, and Laura invited him to come to dinner. Laura was full of great goodness and kindness, a goodness hardly concealed by her disgruntled and grudging remarks. She was unable to understand what was wrong. She lent the boys money and helped them in whatever they attempted, knowing that she was used by them and used most of all by Rudyard. She made petulant remarks, she said that she was a fool, but she always pressed herself forward to be helpful, typing Rudyard's manuscripts which she declared more and more often to be just trash and which she could understand less and less as Rudyard's indulgence in lyrical philosophizing grew.

Thus on a Saturday night when the circle had long been in full being, Laura spoke loudly, crying out from the kitchen or uttering her sentences in the midst of a conversation.

"Tick, tick, tick," she said as she carried a dish to the table for the midnight supper.

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"What are you ticking about?" asked Edmund Kish, knowing very well that her answer would be an expression of unhappiness.

"O," said Laura, "That's just my life ticking away."

"Can't you stop being human for an evening?" asked Francis French, who did not like to hear of unhappiness.

"No, I can't," said Laura, "I never can, no matter how hard I try. I just keep thinking of the rotten truth, the dirty truth, and nothing but the awful truth."

"We ought to remember," said Rudyard, who was able to enjoy everything, "the profound insight stated in the sentence, *'Joy is our duty.'* "

"I don't feel joyous," said Laura, "and I don't feel like forcing myself to be joyous, whether or not it is a duty. I don't like life, life does not like me, and I am unhappy."

"Laura is right," said Edmund, seeking to show sympathy. "She has a right to her feelings. When I used to get peevish as a child, I would say: 'What should I do? I have nothing to do?' My mother always used to have just one answer: 'Go knock your head against the wall' was what my mother always said. She was a big help."

"Tick, tick, tick," said Laura, "that's just life passing away, second by second."

II: "HOW MUCH MONEY DOES HE MAKE?"

During the week, Edmund Kish had been visited by Israel Brown, the most admired of all the teachers known to the circle. Israel Brown was a man of incomparable learning. He was lean, tall, hollow-cheeked, and Christlike in appearance. When he conversed, he spoke with a passion and rush such that one might suppose that the end of the world were in the offing. He did not seem to belong to this world and this life, although he appeared to all to know about everything in this world. He was a teacher of philosophy, but he touched upon many other subjects, ancient coins, legal codes, marine architecture, the writing of the American Constitution, and the theology of the early Church Fathers. No matter whom he met and no matter where he was, Israel Brown rushed to tell his listener whatever his listener seemed to care about. He was able to correct and contradict whatever his listener said to him

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without offending him. He said hurriedly: "You will pardon me if I point out—" and then told his listener facts about the subject which the listener for the most part did not know existed, or were known to anyone.

Thus on this day when Israel Brown stopped at Edmund Kish's house to get the compendium he had lent Edmund, one of his most devoted students, he was introduced to Edmund's mother and he spoke to her immediately with customary pace and passion, telling her all about her generation, the generation which had come to America from Eastern Europe between 1890 and 1914. He spoke of the causes of the departure of this generation from the old world, the problems and tricks of the oceanliner agencies, the prospects of the immigrants, the images of the new world which had inhabited their minds, the shortage of labor which had drawn them, and the effect of their coming upon social and economic tensions in America.

Mrs. Kish listened to Israel Brown, amazed as everyone was who heard him for the first time, amazed and overwhelmed by his eloquence, his learning, and his ravenous desire to tell all that he knew. Edmund as he listened was amused by the dumbfounded look upon his mother's face. She was an intelligent woman who had been a radical in her youth and she was not wholly bound in mind by her middle-class existence.

As soon as Israel Brown departed, Mrs. Kish breathed deeply as if in relief.

"You have just seen a genius," said Edmund to his mother.

"How much money does he make?" asked Mrs. Kish.

This was the story with which Edmund, excited, came to the Saturday evening at the Bell apartment.

He was not disappointed. The circle responded with enormous joy, and immediately Rudyard started the analysis and augmentation of any news which was a loved practice.

"Your mother's question," said Rudyard, in a tone in which gaiety and a pedagogic attitude were present, "is not only brilliant in itself, but it suggests an inexhaustible number of new versions. Your mother has virtually invented a new genre for the epigram. Thus, whenever anyone is praised and whenever anything favorable is said about anyone, let us reply: *'Never mind that: how much money does he make?'* "

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"Yes," said Ferdinand, "there are all kinds of versions. We can say: 'I am not in the least interested in that. Just tell me one thing: *What's his salary?*' Or if we want to make him look unimportant: 'What you have just told me leaves me absolutely cold. What I want to know is: *What are his wages?*' And then again, '*Precisely how much cash has he in the bank?*' "

" '*How much is his yearly compensation?*' " shouted Laura from the kitchen, preparing the midnight supper, but never failing to listen to all that was said.

"It is one of the most heartbreaking sentences of our time," Jacob Cohen declared in a low voice, "and if it brings one to tears, the tears are obviously for Edmund's mother and not for Israel Brown."

"I don't notice anyone refusing any money," said Laura, bringing coffee, tea, and cocoa to the table, "except for Jacob." Jacob had refused to accept an allowance from his father and he had refused a job in the family business in which his older brothers prospered exceedingly. He had explained that he was going to be what he wanted to be or he was going to be nothing.

"It is easy enough to do nothing," said Jacob, seating himself at the dinner table. He did not like to have anyone's attention fixed upon what, in his being, was most intimate and most important.

"The difficult virtue," said Rudyard, "is to disregard the possibility of making money, to live such a life that making money will have no influence upon one's mind, heart, and imagination." As he spoke, he was hardly aware that he was thinking chiefly of himself.

"You can't write plays for money, you just don't know how," said Laura, "so you don't have any temptation to resist: that's no virtue." Laura's love and admiration of her brother did not prevent her from attempting to overthrow the attitudes in which Rudyard took the most pride. This was the way in which she tried to defend herself from the intensity of her love and the profundity of her acceptance of him.

Rudyard did not answer her. His mind had shifted to his own work, and he took from the shelf the manuscript book in which his last play was written, seated himself upon the studio couch, and studied his own work, a look of smiling seriousness upon his face.

The other boys were seated at the dinner table, slowly eating

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the midnight supper and rejoicing in Mrs. Kish's question. Laura pampered each of them in his stubborn idiosyncrasy of taste. Edmund liked his coffee light, Rudyard liked his very strong, Ferdinand would only drink Chinese tea, Edmund insisted on toast, although most of them liked pumpernickel bread best of all. Laura provided what each of them liked best, which did not prevent her from being ironic about their preferences and assuming the appearance of one who begrudges and denies all generous indulgence and attention.

"How beautiful," said Rudyard loudly without raising his gaze from his manuscript book, "and yet no one likes this play, not even my intimate friends. But in a generation or in fifty years, it will be cheered as the best dramatic work of the century!"

Marcus Gross strode in, his entrances being at once loud and founded on the assumption that he had been present all evening.

"The theater in which your plays are performed," he said, "ought to be named *Posterity*."

"Very good," said Rudyard, "you may think that you are attacking me, but I regard that as one of the finest things ever said about an author!"

It was felt that this was a perfect reply.

Between Rudyard and Marcus an antagonism had long existed, excited for the most part by Rudyard's open contempt for Marcus, who admired Rudyard very much, but was forced to conceal his admiration.

"You are absolutely safe," said Marcus, responding to the laughter, "you are taking no risk whatever. We will all be dead before anyone knows if you are right or wrong."

"I know now," said Rudyard serenely, never admitting the small doubts which on occasion overtook him and suppressing his anguish at not being recognized as a great playwright.

"The fact is," said Jacob half-aloud, thinking of the life which they lived, "we do not have very much of a choice. It is a question of your money or your life, the Mexican bandit's question. We have a choice between doing what we don't want to do or doing nothing."

"Last week," said Lloyd Tyler, the boy of the circle, and the most silent one, "my father bought his yearly ticket in the Irish Sweepstakes and it all began again, just the same as every other year."

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He told them of the new dialogue between his parents, discussing the Irish Sweepstakes.

"What would you do, if you won one hundred and fifty thousand dollars?" Mrs. Tyler had asked her husband. The cruelest irony was in her voice, for she resented her husband very much because her life had not been what she had expected it to be. What she was saying was that he would not know what to do with a great deal of money.

"What would you do with it?" she said again for emphasis, disturbing Mr. Tyler's careful examination of the evening newspaper.

"I would sleep," said Mr. Tyler flatly and strongly, for he recognized this as a criticism of his powers and his way of life.

"But you sleep now," said Mrs. Tyler, unwilling to be put off, "I never saw anyone sleep as much as that man," she said to Lloyd who was trying to keep out of an interchange in which he recognized twenty-five years of feeling.

"It would be a different sleep," said Mr. Tyler. "If I had one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, it would not be the same kind of sleep."

"No one sleeps better than you do," said Mrs. Tyler, but weakly, knowing that she had been worsted.

"What a triumph!" cried Edmund joyously. "Not even Swift would have made a better answer."

"Yes," said Rudyard, "we ought to strike a medal for your father, Lloyd. He has justified all of us."

"I wonder what he would do with one hundred and fifty thousand dollars," said Marcus.

"He would sleep the sleep of the just and the self-fulfilled," Jacob answered. "What does he have to show for his thirty years of work? He has nothing."

"He has himself," said Rudyard, who often chose to regard all things in an ideal light.

"He does not like himself," said Lloyd, "he does not care very much for himself."

"It is his own fault if he does not care very much for himself," answered Rudyard.

"Is it his own fault?" asked Lloyd sadly, for he liked his father very much. "He thinks that he would see my sister and her husband

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and his grandchildren more often, if he had money, and if he had given my sister a dowry. He thinks that his son-in-law would think more of him and ask him to dinner more often."

"In my opinion," said Rudyard, using the phrase which was always the introduction of a dogma, "money has nothing whatever to do with the matter. Pardon me for being intimate, but I would say that the real cause of all the difficulty is that your father did not know how to make love, or your mother has never wanted to have your father make love to her. This is the true meaning of the fact that she is dissatisfied with him. Love is always the beginning of everything, that's obvious. And perhaps we may go so far as to say, that *if* there had been satisfied love between your parents, your father would have prospered and made as much money as your mother wanted him to make."

"That's just an *idea,* that's nothing but an *idea.* Money is the root of all good!" shouted Laura from the kitchen, helping herself to one more pony of gin as the visitors arose to depart.

"Everything is mixed in everything else," said Jacob to himself, thinking of how much Laura desired to be loved.

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Jean Vannier

A CENTURY'S BALANCE SHEET

*Schuldig müssen wir werden, wenn wir wachsen wollen.**

A hundred years ago a London press struck off a slender green-covered pamphlet of twenty-three pages, which was not even to be put on sale. Its authors were two young German emigrees, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels; its title, *Manifesto of the Communist Party.*

The pamphlet proclaimed a new era, that of the struggle of the proletariat for communism. The bourgeoisie, so it ran, brings together the population in large cities, centralizes production, and concentrates the wealth. It creates a new class, the industrial proletariat, whose ranks it incessantly swells. This modern proletariat, having no property it can call its own, sets in motion means of production that demand collective work. This social character of production makes it impossible for the proletariat—unlike other oppressed classes—to insist on a share of the wealth for each individual member. It cannot but want communism, the abolition of private property; while in emancipating itself, it automatically emancipates all society, whose class divisions it is destined to abolish. From the utopia it was, communism becomes the scientifically predictable goal toward which the proletarian movement is heading.

In 1925, Léon Trotsky compared this conception of the authors of the Communist Manifesto to Leverrier's discovery of Neptune, for from his study of the disturbances on Uranus, the French astronomer had deduced the existence of a new planet and determined its orbit. From their study of the disturbances of bourgeois society, Marx and Engels had deduced the existence of a new class, the proletariat, and traced its orbit: a line that pointed to communism.

* "We must grow in guilt if we are to grow at all." (Sudermann)

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Now this is a point that the commentators have never failed to emphasize; for most of them the Manifesto has in it all the certitude of natural science. Its fundamental hypothesis—that the proletariat can and must take the fate of society into its hands, snatch it from the catastrophe into which the bourgeoisie is leading it, and guide it toward communism—seems to them as solidly based, or nearly so, as the laws of motion governing the heavenly bodies. Without pausing to examine just what the modern physicist considers as truth in this domain, it is enough to observe that Neptune still follows the orbit marked out for it by Leverrier, whereas, unhappily, the course of the proletariat has, for more than a third of a century, been increasingly erratic. So much so that it is impossible today to shrug off the necessity of a systematic scrutiny of Marx's fundamental hypothesis.

The proletariat is no longer what it was in 1848: a new star just emerging into sight over the horizon. For a hundred years now, its course has shown what it is capable of, but also, unfortunately, what it has been unable to accomplish.

It has shown itself capable of outbursts of heroism, during which it sacrifices itself without a thought, and develops a power so strong as to shake society to its very foundations. It can rid itself in an instant of the most inveterate prejudices, while there seems to be no limit to its audacity. But by and by, whatever the consequences of its action, whether victory or defeat, it is finally caught up in the sluggish, quotidian flow of things.

The fetid backwaters of the past seep back; the proletariat sinks into indolence and cynicism. And even in its triumphant moments, it exhibits a want of consciousness in the choice of its leaders. The "instinctive sense of reality" attributed to it by Auguste Comte, which it so readily reflects in many a circumstance, abandons it at such moments. Its courage and self-sacrifice are not enough to give it what, precisely, is needed in order to act out the role assigned to it by Marx: political capacity. What the proletariat is incapable of achieving is a leadership which will be faithful to its interests, will understand and defend them boldly, imaginatively, and tenaciously. Such is the task which, for these last one hundred years, it has proved itself incapable of carrying out.

The crisis of our age is in a sense, then, that of the leadership

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of the proletariat. But if a political analysis of our age ought necessarily to undertake a criticism of those who claim today to represent the interests of the proletariat, it cannot stop there. Unless we are prepared to say that the whole evil lies in the fact that nature has not produced the germs from which upright, farseeing leaders can emerge, we are constrained to examine the social situation and political history of the working class in order to seek out the causes of its century-old political incapacity.*

On more than one occasion Marx and Engels compared the future triumph of the proletariat to the earlier triumph of the bourgeoisie. In their wake, socialists have all too often repeated that the modern proletariat is in some sense to play the role that the bourgeoisie took in the past. At this point, however, the differences rather than the similarities must be emphasized.

The bourgeoisie was a propertied class, growing richer and richer, sure of itself, educated, and cultivated. As a whole, it understood very well how to take hold of society and, in the eyes of almost all the nation, to act as the representative of general welfare, thereby inculcating its own social system and assuring its political supremacy. This, precisely, is the task that the proletariat has until now shown itself incapable of undertaking.

Occasionally the authors of the Manifesto compared the modern proletarian to the slave of antiquity, but they hastened to underscore the differences. Capitalism concentrates more and more proletarians in the big cities and develops a technology which should make an abundance for all possible in the future. Whereas the slave of antiquity could do nothing to retrieve society from its fallen state, the modern proletarian, concentrated in the cities with the technical apparatus in his hands, cannot long fail to recognize his own strength, and then to seize political power and advance mankind toward communism.

These arguments had some weight in 1848, and the fundamental hypothesis of the authors of the Manifesto was then perfectly legitimate—in fact, the whole development of society since 1789 pointed to it. But, legitimate as it was, the hypothesis was only an hypothesis. Marx and Engels had no dynamometer available in 1848 for meas-

* "The fact that we repeatedly fail in some venture merely through chance is perhaps the best proof that chance is not the cause of our failure." (Cournot)

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uring the future force of the proletariat in order to conclusively settle the question of its coming victory. The answer to such a question could only come from experience itself—the political capacity of the proletariat could only be measured in the reality of class conflict.

A century now lies behind us, and experience has turned in its verdict. The political capacity of the working classes has revealed itself as a never-ending capacity for being "betrayed." It may be claimed that we must wait a little while longer. In actuality, however, can we really look forward to a change for the better?

In 1850 Marx was addressing European workingmen in these terms: "You will have to go through fifteen, twenty, fifty years of civil wars and international conflicts, not only in order to transform your circumstances but to transform yourselves and make yourselves fit for political power." Is this process of political education still going on today? Are European workingmen now more "fit for political power" than they were at the conclusion of the First World War? The answer is no. There, as elsewhere, the social and economic conditions of present-day Europe hardly permit us to hope for improvement. Marx's fundamental hypothesis would only regain a measure of reality if some notable development in Europe's productive forces made the proletariat once more a cohesive body with a capacity for struggle and with faith in the future. These qualities would, in fact, have to be raised to an even higher level than that which prevailed in the past, for, even in its best days, the proletariat was not yet "fit for political power." But such a possibility is extremely chimerical: European economy will not emerge from its quagmire for a long time to come.

But, it may be urged, though it is foolish to expect a radical change in European economy, the political capacity of the proletariat may rise to the necessary level in response to other, more "subjective," factors. And certainly, many existing evils can be traced to a well-defined center: Stalinism. And since it is permissible to expect an internal crisis of the Stalinist regime in the years to come, may we not look forward to a renaissance of the working-class movement at such a time?

To be sure, Stalinism may well find itself in a critical position sooner than many imagine. A new situation might take shape overnight in the working-class movement. Stalinism, however, is not the

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single and final cause of the stagnation. Before it, we had Social Democracy. And now, the degeneration of the Trotskyite Fourth International, although without practical importance, is still an extremely bad sign. Stalinism is, after all, only the most monstrous link in a chain of bankruptcies. Finally, it is as much an effect as a cause, or it is a disease which attacks an already feeble organism to make it still more feeble.

The crisis of Stalinism would mean the rebirth of many hopes. This does not mean, however, that it would be possible to forget all past ignominies like some vanishing nightmare. In the first place, the after-effects of Stalinism would still be felt for years to come. And then, one could never think of it as having been "unreal." It is no good trying to explain the continuance and even extension of Stalinism in and across the international working-class movement on the grounds that the workers mistook Stalin's Russia for the October Revolution. The causes lie much deeper and are precisely such as to call the political capacity of the proletariat into question. But even if one wanted to think of the whole business as little more than a fraud, a fraud that has been successfully engaged in for the last twenty years—and what a twenty years—that still presupposes a capacity on the part of somebody for being tricked for twenty years. And if the trickster were finally unmasked, would that mean that his victims were then and there "fit for political power"? To turn a deaf ear to such a question would be both foolish and dangerous.

But the further objection may be made that the strength of the proletariat can only be measured against that of the bourgeoisie; that it is purely relative. Since the bourgeoisie continues to reveal its increasingly hopeless bankruptcy, may we not expect one day to see the political triumph of the proletariat, even if we assume that it has already passed the zenith of its absolute strength? The bankruptcy of the European ruling classes is as complete as one could have imagined a hundred years ago. But if this fact is a necessary condition to the seizure of power by the proletariat, it is by no means a sufficient condition. The question is *not* merely one of relative strength. To seize and hold power the proletariat would have to demonstrate a minimum, a rather high minimum at that, of political capacity; more exactly, it would have to show a capacity to "secrete" a devoted and perspicacious leadership, to control that leadership, to change it

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with speed if the need arose—not thirty or forty years after a "betrayal." A capacity for handling such problems is precisely what being "fit for political power" means after all. Without that aptitude, the fundamental hypothesis cannot hold.

Yet, it may finally be conceded, if all that is true for the European proletariat, we must not forget the American proletariat, the most powerful in the world; it has not yet given an accounting of itself. This is true enough. We do have an unknown quantity here. But it would not be very sensible to fasten upon the American proletariat now a century-old hypothesis that has proved invalid on a continent with which America, after all, has many points in common.

The end of the Second World War, out of which no movement emerged to indicate that the proletariat was yet fit for power, has, I believe, conclusively invalidated the fundamental hypothesis of Marx, at least as far as Europe is concerned. What we have witnessed is the end of an era. Between 1848 to 1914 it was still possible to say that the political potential of the proletariat would continue to grow with time. From 1914 to the end of the Second World War, the answer to this question lay in the balance. But now the matter is clear. It is no longer permissible to expect a future complex of economic, social, and political conditions to be more favorable to the political ripening of the proletariat than any such complex was in the past. The whole inter-war period has now become a part of our history, and the present political impotence of the working class has finally given it meaning. Beyond all circumstantial explanations, this impotence, confronting us daily, enables us to grasp the political history of Europe since 1914.

But why blame the workingmen? some will exclaim, throwing in a few strong words. There is no question here of blame or moral responsibility. The political incapacity of the proletariat springs from its status as an exploited and oppressed class, from nationalism, wars, and misery. If responsibility must be dragged into the matter, it is bourgeois society as a whole which is responsible for not having given birth to a new class ready to take political power directly into its hands.

Does the collapse of Marx's central hypothesis imply the collapse of his whole doctrine? On the plane of political action—and it is the one which interests us here—Marx's hypothesis on the exer-

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cise of political power by the proletariat acting as a class is fundamental and, compared to it, all other aspects of his doctrine are secondary. In the final analysis it is the main factor in any judgment that can be made of the Marxist system. But if we admit that the hypothesis is no longer valid, what becomes of the rest of the doctrine?

There is no necessary logical connection between Marx's fundamental hypothesis and his economic doctrine. All that Marx could claim to demonstrate in his economic studies was that capitalism is not an eternal but an historical mode of production, the functioning of which becomes, by the very laws of its development, more and more unstable. This conclusion served to confirm Marx in his fundamental hypothesis, but the former was by no means logically implied in the latter. What remains of Marx's economic doctrine must be determined by utterly different criteria. The same may be concluded of the historical, sociological, or philosophic aspects of his doctrine.

What is actually destroyed by the collapse of the fundamental hypothesis is the validity of an esoteric Marxist system standing in opposition to the totality of profane (read: *bourgeois*) knowledge. But that system was a construction of the Marxist epigoni rather than of Marx himself. Marx's contribution should be considered in relation to our present body of scientific knowledge, and the value of any of its parts should then be determined by scientific criteria.

The problem of the fundamental hypothesis has provoked two opposed yet complementary attitudes. One attitude is to shun politics and to have no further aim than to forget as speedily and as completely as possible the years spent in the Marxist movement. The other is to take the fundamental hypothesis as an axiom and to refuse categorically to examine it. The two attitudes, one as false as the other, finally reinforce each other. It is the task of our reason, if this dilemma is ever to be resolved, to discover such possibilities of action as may exist, along with the most suitable means of realizing them. If, as seems only too clear, the proletariat has shown itself to be incapable of filling the political role originally assigned to it by the authors of the Manifesto, that does not mean it is condemned to remain a purely passive factor in the historical process. Quite the contrary; the belief in a steady decline is as ill-founded as that of continuous progress.

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Describing the intellectual climate of Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, Trotsky wrote: "Protestantism and democracy, under the aegis of which the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century revolutions of the West were accomplished, had long since become conservative doctrines. . . . Intellectuals needed a new doctrine for the struggles that lay ahead, one which nothing had compromised." That would also seem to be what is needed today. Bolshevism, which thirty years ago had kindled unbounded hopes, has been compromised by Stalin no less than Jacobinism was by Napoleon. If the fine phrases of the French Revolution led to the rule of the bourgeoisie, the Bolshevik experiment has bogged down in the mire of the Stalinist universe, with its slave labor running into the millions, its omnipresent police, its pitiless exploitation of workingmen, its inflexible caste distinctions, its stifling of art, thought, and human feeling. Doubtless this is not what the old Bolsheviks bargained for. But in the eyes of millions of men, of the younger generations, Bolshevism—and this is the decisive point—is no longer a new doctrine which nothing has yet compromised. Marx and Bolshevism belong henceforth to history no less than Rousseau and Jacobinism.

The most to be hoped for by groups who claim to belong to the Marxist succession (I am not speaking of Stalinists, naturally) is for them to serve as a hyphen between past and future; to take in a way such a role as Buonarotti played between Babeuf and Marx.

Nothing is gained by saying: let us hold fast to the fundamental hypothesis as long as nothing better is proposed. To receive answers to questions, one must first raise them. It is only by openly facing the difficulties of the fundamental hypothesis that a step to their solution can be taken. It would be as idle to shut one's eyes on them as to turn one's back on politics. In either case, the problem is still there. Only by a rational and methodical scrutiny of the lessons of the past and of present possibilities will we be enabled to work effectively toward preparing for a future. Whoever is content at this late date to go on repeating the basic hypothesis without advancing some new and decisive argument in its favor scarcely merits a hearing. Proposed solutions may well be widely divergent; only mutual criticism will make possible an intelligent choice. But in such an endeavor nothing can be held sacred—everything is called into question. Only

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after having been put through such a crucible could socialism conceivably re-emerge as a viable doctrine and plan of action.

(*Translated by Felix Giovanelli*)

Vernon Watkins

ATLAS ON GRASS

Atlas on grass, I hold the moving year.
I pull the compass to a point unguessed.
Vast midnight flies to morning in the breast,
All moves to movement, moves and makes a sphere.
Rough Winter loosens leaves long-veined with fear,
Then the seed moves to its unsleeping rest.
Faith springs where beads of longing lie confessed.
Time lost is found; the salmon leaps the weir.
Death stops the mouths of graves, is coverer
Shrouding and hiding what the pulse reveals,
But he, too, moves to his Deliverer;
Judgment will never stop the dancer's heels.
What's gone forever is forever here,
And men are raised by what a myth conceals.

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MODERN DOCUMENTS

S. T.*

THE MORALE OF THE RED ARMY IN GERMANY

Symptoms of what is called in our army moral and political disintegration appeared with particular clarity after we had entered Poland and discovered that the local population's standard of living was relatively high. Our soldiers' reaction to this discovery was reflected both in their readiness to fall under "bourgeois influence," and in the cruel excesses they perpetrated against this population. In Germany proper, these symptoms became more widespread and more acute. The whole army, from privates to generals, was stricken by a true epidemic of "junk collecting" (the Russian term coined for the occasion, *barakholstvo,* became official; it was soon used in army orders). Almost every soldier provided himself with a horse-drawn wagon, on which he loaded his "war trophies," consisting of bicycles, feather beds, or kitchenware—in brief, everything he could lay his hands on. The Russian infantry units began to look like traveling gypsy camps. At the head rode the company commander, usually in a carriage, drunk, wearing a motley costume contrived out of Russian and German uniforms; at his side there was almost always a woman, often garbed as a Soviet nurse. He was followed by a long line of junior officers and privates, in their britskas, which were often so piled with junk of every description that no guns could be seen. Naturally, there were many laggards, who for months on end pretended to be trying to catch up with their units, and who plundered as they went.

Such slogans as "When you see a German, kill him," supplied the ideological justification for the perpetration of absolutely monstrous crimes, most of them sexual, against the local population. The invasion routes were strewn with barbarously mutilated corpses of

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women. Multiple rape reached mass proportions; the junior officers not only failed to restrain their subordinates, but very often participated in the orgies, and sometimes instigated them. Looting of towns was often accompanied by arson, and many places (such as Landsberg on the Warta, and Stolp and Lauenburg in Pomerania) were destroyed not during but after the fighting.

Confronted with this elemental outbreak, the military and particularly the political authorities of the Red Army were completely at a loss. On the one hand, it became evident that the army was beginning to change, or perhaps already had changed, into an unruly mob. (It frequently proved impossible to reassemble a unit after it had reached a town; on one occasion, a colonel who had distinguished himself at the front was killed by a shot in the back while trying to restore order on the march.) On the other hand, the army command was unwilling to apply radical measures to curb such manifestations of the "sacred" lust for revenge, because the chief political directive from above, from Moscow, continued to be: "Kill the German."

The active effort to check disintegration began only after the cessation of hostilities. The stages in the change of the political line were approximately as follows. First, the concept of "sacred" revenge was defined "more accurately": the soldiers were told that the best way of taking revenge was not to indulge in individual acts of retaliation, but to compel the Germans to rebuild everything they had destroyed. After some time, the term "revenge" was dropped entirely, and the political instructors began to explain that the army's business was not to take revenge but to help the Germans create a democratic regime, and that the best thing the army could do was to impress the Germans by its own exemplary behavior. Later, intensified disciplinary and repressive measures were introduced.

When conditions had become relatively peaceful and stable, the political propaganda centered on the struggle against "bourgeois influence," the main carriers of which were German women. "Cohabitation with German women" (the official term) became the principal target of attack. There was sufficient reason for this. Future historians will some day give the German woman the first place among the factors that demoralized the army of occupation. Despite the strictest bans and the various penalties instituted by the army

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and the Party, the majority of the military personnel provided themselves with German women. Sexual craving—a natural enough manifestation in an army on field duty—does not sufficiently account for this phenomenon. The attraction exercised by German women had a deep and, if you will, a social reason: the Soviet privates and officers for the first time found themselves in a milieu that seemed luxurious in comparison with their way of life at home. The German women were only the most vivid embodiment of this luxury—a symbol of a higher living standard. Applications for licenses to marry German women, and cases of suicide and desertion because of refusal of such permissions, became more and more frequent. The authorities tried to combat these tendencies by rigorous measures. The only result achieved was that the army orders began to refer to "secret violators." When German places of entertainment were declared out of bounds, the "evil" migrated to private apartments.

The spread of venereal diseases assumed threatening proportions. To check it the authorities resorted to repression. The patients were subjected to disciplinary measures, their derelictions were made known to their wives and relatives, and even made public. It was forbidden to consult German doctors. All this resulted only in a further spread of the diseases. The number of patients grew so great that they began to be segregated in special units. I myself knew of two such regiments, which we ironically baptized SS or Elite regiments. Every member, from privates to colonel, had a venereal disease. These units were under a particularly severe discipline; medical treatment was accompanied with intensified military and political training. At the same time the authorities encouraged (and later ordered) the soldiers to bring their wives from Russia to Germany. Unmarried officers going to Russia on leave were told to marry there and not to return without their wives. Notwithstanding all this, German women have remained the army's gravest problem.

The itch for possessions also remains disquieting. The political authorities consider it less alarming than the problem of women; but it, too, has assumed large proportions. Officers are the chief culprits. Privates have less money with which to buy goods, lesser facilities for storing them. That is why all their covetousness is focused on watches; they put five or six of them on each wrist, wear them even when asleep, and constantly exchange them. Officers, particu-

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larly men who have families, acquire leather coats, suits, cameras, motorcycles, or cars. I met one commanding officer who owned thirty leather coats and as many pairs of boots. The wife of another commander had more than fifty dresses made for her by a dressmaker. Officers, singly and in groups, entered German factories and traded vodka and cigarettes for all kinds of goods. Merchandise by the truckload—sometimes it even filled freight cars—was sent home to Russia by high-ranking officers. One general, when going home on leave, loaded his acquisitions into three automobiles (Dodges, made in America). I knew this man personally, and he was less rapacious than many others.

The campaign against acquisitiveness was never too intense. Repressive measures were applied only in glaringly criminal cases. The political struggle against the profiteers was particularly difficult because it was difficult to find a soldier who had not sinned. Once, at a meeting of officers' wives, a general—chief of the unit's political department—began to chide his audience for being infected with the vice of junk collecting. There were cries of "How about your own wife?" and the general sat down.

It should be noted that army wives are the carriers of "bourgeois influence" into the Russian hinterland. The censors have intercepted many letters from such women to their female friends, expressing immoderate enthusiasm for German customs, German apartments and their comforts, German clothing and furniture. An extensive campaign has been waged against such letters.

As soon as the army wives had become acclimated in Germany, one could observe an emerging class antagonism between the generals' wives, who travel in cars, spend hours with hairdressers and manicurists, etc., and the wives of junior officers, who live on the scant army pay and must content themselves with crumbs from the tables of the generals. This antagonism has penetrated into schools and nurseries. In the closed circle of an occupation garrison, the difference in living standard between the generals' and junior officers' children is conspicuous.

The reports the army receives from the homeland contribute to the demoralization. At the end of the war, the soldiers were eager to write letters to relatives and to receive replies. These communications from home—as well as letters from demobilized comrades—

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are usually read aloud. The reports they contain are not cheerful. Letters from villages—which even today constitute by far the greatest part of all the letters to the army—speak only of hunger and misery. The censors cannot help letting them pass, for otherwise they would have to stop everything.

I have read many such letters. The main theme is always the same: the parents implore the son to hasten his return home, because they themselves cannot manage. "Otherwise, it means the death of us here." Nor are letters from cities any more cheerful. Demobilized soldiers tell of the chicaneries they meet with at every step. I recall a letter from a private first-class who had a number of medals. It was a masterpiece of sarcasm, was read and reread by groups of soldiers, and intensively discussed.

Even more revealing are the accounts of soldiers returned from furlough. Their essential problem is this: the traveler who goes beyond Brest Litovsk, i.e., who enters the territory of the pre-war USSR, finds himself in a kingdom of darkness, where conditions of life are far worse than those prevailing in conquered Germany or even in Poland. One returned officer with whom I spoke had visited his father somewhere in the Urals. He found him in a small dark room, sleeping on some sacking; there was not a piece of bread in the house. The father owned only a single pair of worn-out trousers, and the son gave him a civilian suit brought from Germany. The officer assured me that his father was no exception, that in the Urals everyone lived in this way. The people are hungry, ragged, exhausted, and embittered. "Cultural life" is represented by one filthy club, where the young people gather to sing, drink, and brawl.

All this taken together accounts for widespread desertion. The men run away not so much because they want to escape from the hardships of military service, but rather because they fear returning home to the Soviet "kingdom of darkness." Late in 1947, about three thousand demobilized soldiers waiting to be transported to Russia had been assembled in one of the towns of the Soviet zone in Germany. Finally they were told that their contingent was to leave the next day. The same night more than half of them disappeared.

To combat desertion, discipline has been made more rigorous, judicial penalties have been increased. Furloughs are granted only in exceptional cases. Soldiers are taken to the movies under guard.

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On their days of rest, they are compelled to attend football games; twenty-two men play, the rest look on. Roll calls and checks of all kinds have multiplied. The sentences imposed upon deserters are published in the reports of their units, and sometimes of all the units of the army of occupation. Deserters to the English and American zones are singled out for severe treatment. I recall the case of a soldier who fled to the American zone and was returned to us. The court sentenced him to be shot and in addition ordered his family to be deported to a concentration camp. The verdict was read to every unit, with the following passage: "He fled to the Americans but was returned to us in accordance with international custom."

At one point desertion assumed such proportions that the courts shrank from imposing the sentence required by Soviet law, namely, execution by a firing squad, and confined themselves to the penalty of imprisonment or deportation to a concentration camp. In the summer of 1946, however, Marshal Konev issued a special order condemning this "moderation" and directing the courts to treat all cases of desertion to non-Russian areas as high treason and to sentence to death all defendants found guilty. Thereupon the number of executions jumped to a thousand per month.

In these circumstances, attempts to flee westward are nothing but a form of suicide. Deserters often form gangs that engage in banditry. As a result many roads in the Soviet zone have become impassable, and the occupation authorities openly warn against traveling at night.

Side by side with the increasing severity of disciplinary repression, political propaganda is being intensified. A number of recently published pamphlets insist upon the need for "greater watchfulness." These pamphlets are studied in soldiers' circles. There is one, for instance, on the subject of "treason to the fatherland." After a short ideological introduction, the text is devoted to a graphic description of the penalties in store for traitors. A special passage stresses the point that "not only the traitor himself but also his relatives, even if they have known nothing about the crime, are subject to severe punishment and will be sent to remote regions."

Much attention is given to "elevating" the level of ideological orientation of the army, particularly of the officer corps. This "elevating" usually consists in redigesting the *Short Course of the History*

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of the Russian Communist Party, but the students rarely go beyond the famous Chapter IV (on dialectical materialism as interpreted by Stalin). Here and there Party universities have been created, with a two-year program of weekly lectures. The curriculum includes courses in the history of the Communist Party, on the Five-Year Plan, on the history of foreign policy, and on dialectical materialism. The officers dutifully register at such universities, but there is no genuine interest in them, and, needless to say, the poor quality of the teaching personnel does not contribute to their popularity.

As a rule the officials of the political department enjoy little respect in the army. Between them and the combat troops a sharp antagonism prevails, and behind the scenes a continuous struggle goes on. The soldiers refer to the political officials only as "agents" (*deiateli*). Ostensibly preaching against cohabitation with German women and junk collecting, the political officials often sin in these respects far more than the combat troops. There is a well-known story of a lieutenant colonel of the political department, who after bringing his wife from Russia, continued to cohabit with his German landlady. When his wife was about to report this fact to the authorities, he threatened to commit suicide. It would be naive to speak of sincerity of conviction in these "educators of the ranks." The only thing in which they are successful is the tracking down of those who have "disintegrated." Such "disintegrated" soldiers are demobilized and sent directly to concentration camps.

The employees in military and administrative offices, and the so-called dismantlers (officials empowered to dismantle and evacuate German plants and factories), whose work brings them in contact with local populations, have proved particularly prone to "disintegration." These groups supply the bulk of the defendants in the military courts. The commander of one city garrison turned his offices into a brothel; another commander, a colonel, became a tool of "foreign espionage," under the influence of his female interpreter, a foreigner. To combat such disintegration, the command changes the office personnel frequently, but to little avail: knowing that their term of service is short, the employees are in a particular hurry to make their fortunes in these lush regions. I was told about one officer who deserted to the west taking his whole family with him in a government car.

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This brief account will, I think, be sufficient to give the reader an idea of the morale of the Soviet army of occupation. It is no great exaggeration to say that this army can hardly be considered an effective fighting force. The high command knows this. Late in 1947 I talked to a responsible officer of the political department, who did not conceal from me his feeling that in the event of a serious conflict with a Western power the Russian authorities would have to cope with mass desertions.

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Paul Bowles

UNDER THE SKY

Inland from the sea on the dry coastal plain lay the town, open, spread out under the huge high sky. People who lived outside in the country, and even some of the more educated town-dwellers, called the town "the Inferno" because nowhere in the region was the heat so intense. No other place around was quite so shadowless and so dusty; it seemed that the clouds above shrank upwards to their farthest possible positions. Many miles above, and to all sides, they hung there in their massive patterns, remote and motionless. In the spring, during the nights, the lightning constantly jumped from one cloud to another, revealing unexpected distances between them. Then, if anyone ever looked at the sky, he was surprised to see how each flash revealed a seemingly more distant portion of the heavens to which still more clouds had receded. But people in the town seldom turned their heads upward. They knew at what time of the year the rains would come, and it was unnecessary to scan those vast regions in order to say what day that would be. When the wind had blown hard for two weeks so that the dust filled the wide empty streets, and the lightning grew brighter each night until finally there was a little thunder, they could be sure the water would soon fall.

Once a year when the lightning was in the sky Jacinto left his village in the mountains and walked down to the town, carrying with him all the things his family had made since his last trip. There were two days of walking in the sierra where it was cool; the third day the road was through the hot lands, and this was the day he preferred, because the road was flat and he could walk faster and leave the others behind. He was taller and prouder than they, and he refused to bend over in order to be able to trot uphill and downhill as they did. In the mountains he labored to keep up with them,

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but on the plain he strode powerfully ahead and sometimes arrived at the market before sunset.

Now he stood in the public square with a small paper parcel in his hand. He had arrived the day before. Instead of sitting in the sidestreet near the fountain and discussing the sales with the others from his village, he walked into the municipal garden and sat down on a concrete bench marked "1936." He looked up and down the walk. No one paid him any attention. He was barefoot, so the shoe-shine boys passed him by.

Tearing open the paper packet he emptied the dried leaves into his left hand. With his right he picked out all the little round, black berries and tossed them away. Then he crushed the leaves and slowly rolled them into five thin cigarettes. This took all his attention for a half hour.

A voice beside him said: "That's pretty."

He looked up. It was a town dweller; he had never seen him before, so he did not answer.

"All for you?" said the other in the silken town voice that Jacinto had learned to distrust.

"I bought it. I made them," said Jacinto.

"But I like *grifas* too," smiled the stranger. He was poorly dressed and had black teeth.

Jacinto covered the cigarettes completely with one big hand which he placed on the seat of the bench. The stranger pointed to a soldier sleeping on another bench near the iron bandstand.

"He wants one and I want one. You should be more careful. It's three months now for possessing marijuana. Don't you know?"

"No," said Jacinto. "I don't know." Then he slowly handed over two of the cigarettes. The man took them.

"So long," he said.

Jacinto stood up full of fury, and with the other three cigarettes still in his hand, he walked out into the plaza and down the long street that led to the station. It was nearly time for the daily train from the north. Sometimes crazy people got off, who would give a man enough money for two good meals, just for carrying a bundle into the town for them. There was a cemetery behind the roundhouse where some of the railroad employees went to smoke the weed. He remembered it from the preceding year; he had met an inspector

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there who had taken him to see a girl. She had proved to be ugly—one side of her face was mottled with blue and purple.

At the station the train had already arrived. The people trying to get on were fighting with those who were trying to get off. He wondered why with all those open windows everyone insisted on going through the two little doors at the ends of the cars. It would have been very simple that way, but these people were too stupid to think of it. His defeat at the hands of the townsman still bothered him; he wanted to have a gun so he could pull it out and shout: "I am the father of all of you!" But it was not likely that he ever would have a gun.

Without approaching the platform where so many people were moving about, he stood and impassively watched the confusion. From the crowd three strange-looking people suddenly emerged. They all had very white skin and yellow hair. He knew, of course, that they were from a faraway place because everyone knew that when people looked as strange as that they were from the capital or even farther. There were two women and one man, and as they approached him, he noticed that they were speaking a language which only they could understand. Each one carried a leather bag covered with small squares of colored paper stuck on at different angles. He stepped back, keeping his eyes on the face of the younger woman. He could not be sure whether he found her beautiful or revolting. Still he continued to look at her as she passed, holding on to the man's arm. The other woman noticed him, and smiled faintly as she went by.

He turned angrily and walked toward the tracks. He was angry at her stupidity—for thinking he could have enough money to pay her as much as she would surely want. He walked on until he came to the cemetery. It was empty save for the grey lizards that scurried from the path at his feet. In the farthest corner there was a small square building with a white stone woman on top. He sat in the shade of the little building and took out his cigarettes.

The train whistled; it was starting on its trip to the sea where the people eat nothing but fish and travel on top of the water. He drew in the first few breaths very slowly and deliberately, holding the smoke in his lungs until he felt it burning the edges of his soul. After a few minutes the feeling began to take shape. From the back of his head it moved down to his shoulders. It was as if he were

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wearing a tight metal garment. At that instant he looked at the sky and saw far above him the tiny black dots that were vultures, moving ever so slowly in circles as they surveyed the plain in the afternoon sunlight. Beyond them stood the clouds, deep and monumental. "Ay!" he sighed, shutting his eyes, and it occurred to him that this was what the dead people, who were lying on all sides of him, looked at day after day. This was all they could see—the clouds, and the vultures, of which they needed have no fear, hidden safely as they were, deep in holy ground.

He continued to smoke, going deeper and deeper into delight. Finally he lay back and murmured: "Now I am dead too." When he opened his eyes it was still the same day, and the sun was very low in the sky. Some men were talking near by. He listened; they were trainmen come to smoke, discussing wages and prices of meals. He did not believe any of the figures they so casually mentioned. They were lying to impress one another, and they did not even believe each other. He smoked half of the second cigarette, rose, stretched, and jumped over the cemetery wall, going back to the station by a round-about path in order not to have to speak to the trainmen. Those people, when they smoked, always wanted more and more company; they would never let a fellow smoker go quietly on his way.

He went to the cantina by the station, and standing in the street, watched the railway employees playing billiards inside. As night approached, the lightning became increasingly visible. He walked up the long street toward the center of town. Men were playing marimbas in the doorways and in front of the houses—three or four together, and sometimes only one, indolently. The marimbas and the marijuana were the only good things in the town, reflected Jacinto. The women were ugly and dirty, and the men were all thieves and drunkards. He remembered the three people at the station. They would be in the hotel opposite the plaza. He walked a little faster, and his eyes, bloodshot from lack of sleep and too much of the drug, opened a bit wider.

After he had eaten heartily in the market sitting by the edge of the fountain, he felt very well. By the side wall of the cathedral were all the families from the mountains, some already asleep, the others preparing for the night. Almost all the stalls in the market were dark; a few figures still stood in front of the cold fruit-juice stand. Jacinto

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felt in his pocket for the stub and the whole cigarette, and keeping his fingers around them, walked across to the park. The celestial fireworks were very bright, but there was no thunder. Throughout the town sounded the clink and purr of the marimbas, some near and some far away. A soft breeze stirred the branches of the few lemon trees in the park. He walked along thoughtfully until he came to a bench directly opposite the entrance of the hotel, and there he sat down and brazenly began to smoke his stub. After a few minutes it was easier for him to believe that one of the two yellow-haired women would come out. He flicked away the butt, leaned back and stared straight at the hotel. The manager had put a square loud-speaker over the entrance door, and out of it came a great crackling and hissing that covered the sound of the marimbas. Occasionally a few loud notes of band music rose above the chaos, and from time to time there seemed to be a man's voice speaking behind the noise. Jacinto was annoyed: the women would want to stay inside where they could hear the sound better.

A long time went by. The radio was silenced. The few voices in the park disappeared down the streets. By the cathedral everyone was asleep. Even the marimbas seemed to have stopped, but when the breeze occasionally grew more active, it brought with it, swelling and dying, long marimba trills from a distant part of the town.

It grew very late. There was no sound but the lemon leaves rubbing together and the jet of water splashing into the basin in the center of the market. Jacinto was used to waiting. And halfway through the night a woman stepped out of the hotel, stood for a moment looking at the sky, and walked across the street to the park. From his bench in the dark he watched her as she approached. In the lightning he saw that it was not the younger one. He was disappointed. She looked upward again before moving into the shade of the lemon trees, and in a moment she sat down on the next bench and lighted a cigarette. He waited a few minutes. Then he said: "Señorita."

The yellow-haired woman cried: "Oh!" She had not seen him. She jumped up and stood still, peering toward his bench.

He moved to the end of the seat and calmly repeated the word. "Señorita."

She walked uncertainly toward him, still peering. He knew

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this was a ruse. She could see him quite clearly each second or so, whenever the sky lighted up. When she was near enough to the bench, he motioned for her to sit down beside him. As he had suspected, she spoke his tongue.

"What is it?" she asked. The talk in the strange language at the station had only been for show, after all.

"Sit down, señorita."

"Why?"

"Because I tell you to."

She laughed and threw away her cigarette.

"That's not a reason," she said, sitting down at the other end of the bench. "What are you doing here so late?" She spoke carefully and correctly, like a priest. He answered this by saying. "And you, what are you looking for?"

"Nothing."

"Yes. You are looking for something," he said solemnly.

"I was not sleeping. It is very hot."

"No. It is not hot," said Jacinto. He was feeling increasingly sure of himself, and he drew out the last cigarette and began to smoke it. "What are you doing here in this town?" he asked her after a moment.

"Passing on my way south to the border," she said, and she told him how she was traveling with two friends, a husband and wife, and how she often took a walk when they had gone to bed.

Jacinto listened as he drew in the smoke and breathed it out. Suddenly he jumped up. Touching her arm, he said: "Come to the market."

She arose, asking: "Why?" and walked with him across the park. When they were in the street, he took her wrist fiercely and pressing it, said between his teeth: "Look at the sky."

She looked up wonderingly, a little fearfully. He went on in a low, intense voice: "As God is my witness, I am going into the hotel and kill the man who came here with you."

Her eyes grew large. She tried to wrest her arm away, but he would not let it go, and he thrust his face into hers. "I have a pistol in my pocket and I am going to kill that man."

"But why?" she whispered weakly, looking up and down the empty street.

"I want his wife."

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The woman said: "It is not possible. She would scream."

"I know the proprietor," said Jacinto, rolling his eyes and grinning. The woman seemed to believe him. Now he felt that a great thing was about to happen.

"And you," he said, twisting her arm brutally, "you do not scream."

"No."

Again he pointed to the sky.

"God is my witness. You can save the life of your friend. Come with me."

She was trembling violently, but as they stumbled through the street and he let go of her an instant, she began to run. With one bound he had overtaken her, and he made her stop and look at the sky again as he went through his threats once more. She saw his wide, red-veined eyes in a bright flash of lightning, and his utterly empty face. Mechanically she allowed him to push her along through the streets. He did not let go of her again.

"You are saving your friend's life," he said. "God will reward you."

She was sobbing as she went along. No one passed them as they moved unsteadily on toward the station. When they were nearly there they made a great detour past the edge of town, and finally came to the cemetery.

"This is a holy place," he murmured, swiftly crossing himself. "Here you are going to save your friend's life."

He took off his shirt, laid it on the stony ground, and pushed her down. There was nothing but the insistent, silent flashing in the sky. She kept her eyes shut, but she shuddered at each flash, even with her lids closed. The wind blew harder, and the smell of the dust was in her nostrils.

He took her back as far as the park and there he let go of her. Then he said: "Good night, señorita," and walked away very quickly. He was happy because she had not asked for any money.

The next year when he came down to the train he waited at the station four afternoons to see the train come in. The last afternoon he went to the cemetery and sat near the small square building that had the stone woman on top of it. On the ground the dust blew past. The enormous clouds hung in the sky and the vultures were

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there high above him. As he smoked he recalled the yellow-haired woman. After a time he began to weep, and rolled over onto the earth, clutching the pebbles as he sobbed. An old woman of the town, who came everyday to her son's grave, passed near to him. Seeing him, she shook her head and murmured to herself: "He has lost his mother."

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Jean-Paul Sartre

FOR WHOM DOES ONE WRITE?*

In the first centuries of our era the spiritual was a captive of Christianity, or, if you prefer, Christianity itself was the spiritual, but *alienated*. It was the spirit made object. Hence, it is evident that instead of appearing as the common and forever renewed enterprise of all men, it manifested itself at first as the specialty of a few. Medieval society had spiritual needs, and to take care of them set up a body of specialists who were recruited by co-optation. Today we consider reading and writing as rights of man and, at the same time, as means which are almost as natural and spontaneous as oral language for communicating with the Other. That is why the most uncultured peasant is a potential reader. In the time of the clerks, however, they were techniques reserved strictly for professionals. They were not practiced for their own sake, like spiritual exercises. Their aim was not to obtain access to that large and vague humanism which was later to be called "the humanities." They were means solely of preserving and transmitting Christian ideology. To be able to read was to have the necessary tool for acquiring knowledge of sacred texts and their innumerable commentaries; to be able to write was to be able to comment. Other men no more aspired to possess these professional techniques than we aspire today to acquire those of the cabinetmaker or the paleographer if we practice other professions.

The barons counted on the clerks to produce spirituality and watch over it. By themselves they were incapable of exercising control over writers as the public does today, and they were unable to dis-

* This is another section of Sartre's *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, the first part of which was published in the January number under the title of "What is Writing?" Further selections will appear in later issues. Early next autumn the Philosophical Library plans to bring out the entire work.

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tinguish heresy from orthodox beliefs if they were left without help. They got excited only when the Pope had recourse to the secular arm. Then they pillaged and burned everything, but only because they had confidence in the Pope and because they never turned up their noses at a chance to pillage. It is true that the ideology was ultimately intended for them, for them and the people, but it was communicated to them orally by preachings, and the Church very early made use of a simpler language than writing, the image. The sculpture of the cloisters and the cathedrals, the stained-glass windows, the paintings, and the mosaics speak of God and the Holy Story. The clerk wrote his chronicles, his philosophical works, his commentaries, and his poems on the margin of this vast illustrating enterprise of the faith. He intended them for his peers; they were controlled by his superiors. He did not have to be concerned with the effects which his works would produce upon the masses, since he was assured in advance that they would have no knowledge of them. Nor did he want to introduce remorse into the conscience of a feudal plunderer or caitiff; violence was unlettered. Thus, for him it was not a question of reflecting to the temporal its own image, nor of taking sides, nor of disengaging the spiritual from historical experience by a continuous effort. Quite the contrary; as the writer was of the Church, as the Church was an immense spiritual college which proved its dignity by its resistance to change, as history and the temporal were one and spirituality was radically distinct from the temporal, as the aim of the clerkship was to maintain this distinction, that is, to maintain itself as a specialized body in the face of the century, as, in addition, the economy was so divided up and the means of communication were so few and slow that events which occurred in one province had no effect upon the neighboring province, and as a monastery could enjoy its individual peace, like the hero of *The Acharnians*, while its country was at war, the writer's mission was to prove his autonomy by delivering himself to the exclusive contemplation of the Eternal. He affirmed incessantly the Eternal's existence and demonstrated it by the very fact that his only care was to regard it. In this sense, he realized in effect the ideal of Julien Benda, but one can see under what conditions: spirituality and literature had to be alienated, a particular ideology had to triumph, a feudal pluralism had to make the isolation of the clerks possible, virtually the whole

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population had to be illiterate, and the only public of the writer was limited to the college of other writers. It is inconceivable that one can practice freedom of thought, write for a public which extends beyond the restricted collectivity of specialists, and restrict oneself to describing the content of eternal values and a priori ideas. The good conscience of the medieval clerk flowered on the death of literature.

However, in order for writers to preserve this happy conscience it is not quite necessary that their public be reduced to an established body of professionals. It is enough for them to be steeped in the ideology of the privileged classes, to be completely permeated with it, and to be unable even to conceive of any other. But in this case their function is modified; they are no longer asked to be the *guardians* of dogma but merely not to disparage it. As a second example of the adherence of writers to established ideology, one might, I think, look back to the seventeenth century in France.

The secularization of the writer and his public was in process of being completed in that age. It certainly had its origin in the expansive force of the written thing, its monumental character, and the appeal to freedom which is hidden away in any work of the mind. But external circumstances also contributed to it—the spread of education, the weakening of spiritual power, the appearance of new ideologies which were expressly intended for temporal power. However, secularization does not mean universalization. The writer's public still remained strictly limited. Taken as a whole, it was called *society,* and this name designated a fraction of the court, the clergy, the magistracy, and the rich bourgeoisie. Considered individually, the reader was called a "gentleman" (*honnête homme*) and he exercised a certain function of censorship which was called *taste.* In short, he was both a member of the upper classes and a specialist. If he criticized the writer, it was because he himself was able to write. The public of Corneille, Pascal, and Descartes was Madame de Sévigné, the Chevalier de Méré, Madame de Grignan, Madame de Rambouillet, and Saint-Evremond. Today the public, in relation to the writer, is in a state of passivity; it waits for ideas or a new art form to be imposed upon it. It is the inert mass wherein the idea will assume flesh. Its means of control are indirect and negative; one cannot say that it gives its opinion; it simply buys or does not buy the book; the relationship between author and reader is anal-

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ogous to that of male and female; reading has become a simple means of information and writing a very general means of communication. In the seventeenth century being able to write really meant being able to write well. Not that Providence divided the gift of style equally among all men, but because the reader, if not strictly identical with the writer, was a potential writer. He belonged to a parasitical élite for whom the art of writing was, if not a profession, at least the mark of its superiority. One read because one could write; with a little luck one might have been able to write what one had read.

The public was active; productions of the mind were really *submitted* to it. It judged them by a scale of values which it helped to maintain. A revolution like romanticism was not conceivable in this period because there would have to have been the cooperation of an indecisive mass, which one surprises, overwhelms, and suddenly animates by revealing to it ideas or feelings of which it was ignorant, a mass which, lacking firm convictions, constantly needs to be ravished and fecundated. Convictions in the seventeenth century were unshakeable; the religious ideology was bolstered by a political ideology which the temporal itself secreted; no one publicly questioned the existence of God or the divine right of kings. "Society" had its language, its graces, and its ceremonies which it expected to find in the books it read. Its conception of time, too. As the two historical facts upon which it constantly meditated—original sin and redemption—belonged to a remote past, as it was also from this past that the great ruling families drew their pride and the justification of their privileges, as the future could bring nothing new, since God was too perfect to change, and since the two great earthly powers, the Church and the Monarchy, aspired only to immutability, the active element of temporality was the past, which is itself a phenomenal degradation of the Eternal; the present is a perpetual sin which can find an excuse for itself only if it reflects, with the least possible unfaithfulness, the image of a completed era. For an idea to be received, it must prove its antiquity; for a work of art to please, it must have been inspired by an ancient model.

Again we find writers expressly making themselves the guardians of this ideology. There were still great clerks who belonged to the Church and who had no other concern than to defend dogma. To

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them were added the "watchdogs" of the temporal: historians, court poets, jurists, and philosophers who were concerned with establishing and maintaining the ideology of absolute monarchy. But we see appearing at their side a third category of writers, strictly secular, who, for the most part, *accepted* the religious and political ideology of the age without thinking that they were bound to prove it or preserve it. They did not write about it; they accepted it implicitly. For them, it was what we called a short time ago the context or ensemble of the presuppositions common to readers and author, which are necessary to render the writings of the latter intelligible to the former. In general, they belonged to the bourgeoisie; they were pensioned by the nobility. As they consumed without producing, and as the nobility did not produce either but lived off the work of others, they were the parasites of a parasitic class. They no longer lived in a college but formed an implicit corporation in that highly integrated society; and to remind them constantly of their collegiate origin and former clerkship the royal power chose a certain number of them and grouped them in a sort of symbolic college, the French Academy. Fed by the King and read by an élite, they were concerned solely with responding to the demands of this limited public.

They had as good or almost as good a conscience as the twelfth-century clerks. It is impossible to speak of a potential public as distinguished from a real public in that age. La Bruyère happened to speak *about* peasants, but he did not speak *to* them, and if he took note of their misery, it was not for the sake of drawing an argument against the ideology which he accepted, but in the name of that ideology; it was a disgrace for enlightened monarchs and good Christians. Thus, one spoke about the masses above their heads and even without any conception of helping them to become self-conscious. And the homogeneity of the public banished all contradiction from the authors' souls. They were not pulled between real but detestable readers and potential readers who were desirable but out of reach; they did not ask themselves questions about their role in the world, for the writer questions himself about his mission only in ages when it is not clearly defined and when he must invent or re-invent it, that is, when he notices, beyond the élite who read him, an amorphous mass of possible readers whom he may or may not choose to win, and when he must himself decide, in the event that he actually has the

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opportunity to reach them, what his relations with them are to be.

The authors of the seventeenth century had a definite function because they addressed themselves to an enlightened, strictly limited, and active public which exerted a permanent control over them. Unknown by the people, their job was to reflect back its own image to the élite which supported them.

But there are many ways of reflecting an image: certain portraits are in themselves really contestations; this is because they have been made from without and without passion by a painter who refuses any complicity with his model. However, in order for a writer merely to conceive the idea of drawing a portrait-contestation of his real reader, he must have become conscious of a contradiction between himself and his public, that is, he must come to his readers *from without* and must consider them with astonishment, or he must feel the astonished regard of unfamiliar minds (ethnic minorities, oppressed classes, etc.) weighing upon the little society which he forms with them. But in the seventeenth century, since the potential public did not exist, since the artist accepted without criticism the ideology of the élite, he made himself an accomplice of his public. No unfamiliar stare came to trouble him in his games. Neither the prose writer nor even the poet was damned. They did not have to decide with each work what the meaning and value of literature were, since its meaning and value were fixed by tradition. Well integrated in a hierarchical society, they knew neither the pride nor the anguish of being "different," in short, they were *classical*.

In effect, classicism exists when a society has taken on a relatively stable form and when it has been permeated with the myth of its perpetuity, that is, when it confounds the present with the eternal and historicity with traditionalism, when the hierarchy of classes is such that the potential public never extends beyond the real public, and when each reader is for the writer a qualified critic and censor, when the power of the religious and political ideology is so strong and the interdictions so rigorous that in no case is there any question of discovering new countries of the mind, but only of putting into shape the *commonplaces* adopted by the élite in such a way that reading—which, as we have seen, is the concrete relation between the writer and his public—is a ceremony of *recognition* analogous to the bow of salutation, that is, the ceremonious affirmation that author

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and reader are of the same world and have the same opinions about everything. Thus, each production of the mind is at the same time an act of courtesy, and style is the supreme courtesy of the author toward his reader; and the reader, for his part, never tires of finding the same thoughts in the most diverse of books because these thoughts are his own and he does not ask to acquire others but only to be offered, with magnificence, those which he already has. Hence, it is in a spirit of complicity that the author presents his reader with a portrait which is necessarily abstract; addressing a parasitical class, he cannot show man at work or, in general, the relations between man and external nature. And as, on the other hand, there are bodies of specialists, under the control of the Church and the Monarchy, whose concern it is to maintain the spiritual and secular ideology, the writer does not even suspect the importance of economic, religious, metaphysical, and political factors in the constitution of the person; and as the society in which he lives confounds the present with the eternal, he cannot even imagine the slightest change in what he calls human nature. He conceives history as a series of accidents which affect the eternal man on the surface without deeply modifying him, and if he had to assign a meaning to historical duration he would see in it both an eternal repetition (so that previous events can and ought to provide lessons for his contemporaries) and a process of slight degeneration, since the fundamental events of history have long since *passed* and since, perfection in letters having been attained in antiquity, his ancient models seem peerless.

In all this he is in full harmony with a public which considers work a curse, which does not *feel* its situation in history and in the world simply because it is privileged and because its only concern is faith, respect for the monarch, passion, war, death, and courtesy. In short, the image of the classical man is purely psychological because the classical public is conscious only of its psychology. Furthermore, it must be understood that this psychology is itself traditionalist; it is not concerned with discovering new and deep truths about the human heart nor of setting up hypotheses. It is in unstable societies, when the public exists on several social levels, that the writer, torn and dissatisfied, invents explanations for his anguish. The psychology of the seventeenth century is purely descriptive. It is not based so much upon the author's personal experience as it is the

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aesthetic expression of what the élite thinks about itself. La Rochefoucauld borrowed the form and the content of his maxims from the divertissements of the salons. The casuistry of the Jesuits, the etiquette of the Précieuses, the game of portraits, the ethics of Nicole, and the religious conception of the passions were at the origin of a hundred other works. The comedies drew their inspiration from ancient psychology and the plain common sense of the upper bourgeoisie. Society was thoroughly delighted at seeing itself mirrored in them because it recognized the thoughts it formed about itself; it did not ask to be shown what was, but asked rather for a reflection of what it thought of itself. Doubtless some satires were permitted; but it was the élite which, through pamphlets and comedies, carried on, in the name of its morality, the cleansings and the purges necessary for its health. The ridiculous marquis, the litigants, or the Précieuses are never made fun of from a point of view *external* to the ruling class; it is always a matter of eccentrics who are unassimilable in a civilized society and who live on the margins of the collective life. The Misanthrope is twitted because he lacks courtesy, Cathos and Madelon, because they have too much courtesy; Philaminte goes counter to the accepted ideas about women; the bourgeois gentleman is odious both to the rich bourgeoisie who have a lofty modesty and who know the greatness and the humbleness of their condition and, at the same time, to gentlemen because he wants to push his way into the nobility. This internal and, so to speak, physiological satire has no connection with the great satire of Beaumarchais, P. L. Courier, J. Vallès, and Céline; it was less courageous and much more severe because it exhibited the repressive action which the collectivity practiced upon the weak, the sick, and the maladjusted. It was the pitiless laughter of a gang of street-urchins at the awkwardness of their butt.

The writer, bourgeois in origin and mores, more like Oronte and Chrysale in his home life than like his brilliant and restless confreres of 1780 or 1830, yet accepted in the Society of the Great and pensioned by them, slightly unclassed from above yet convinced himself that talent was no substitute for birth, docile to the reprimands of the clergy, respectful of royal power, happy to occupy a modest place in the immense structure of which the Church and the Monarchy were the pillars, somewhat above the merchants and the

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scholars, below the nobles and the clergy, he practiced his profession with a good conscience, convinced that he had come too late, that everything had been said, and that the only proper thing to do was to re-say it agreeably. He conceived the glory which awaited him as a feeble reflection of hereditary titles, and if he expected it to be eternal it was because he did not even suspect that the society of his readers might be overthrown by social changes. The permanence of the royal family seemed to guarantee his own renown.

Yet, almost in spite of himself, the mirror which he modestly offered to his readers was magical; it enthralled and compromised. Even though everything had been done to offer them only a flattering and complying image, more subjective than objective, and more internal than external, this image remained none the less a work of art, that is, it had its basis in the freedom of the author and was an appeal to the freedom of the reader. Since it was beautiful, it was made of glass; aesthetic distance put it out of reach. Impossible to be delighted with it, to find any comfortable warmth in it, any discrete indulgence. Even though it was made up of the commonplaces of the age and that facile complacency which united contemporaries like an umbilical cord, it was supported by a freedom and thereby another kind of objectivity. It was *itself,* to be sure, that the élite found in the mirror, but itself as it would have seen itself had it gone to the extreme of severity. It was not congealed into an object by the gaze of the Other, for neither the peasant nor the workingman had yet become the *Other* for it, and the art of reflective presentation which characterizes the art of the seventeenth century was a strictly internal process; however, it pushed to the limits each person's efforts to see into himself clearly; it was a perpetual Cogito.

To be sure, it did not call idleness, oppression, or parasitism into question, because these aspects of the ruling class are revealed only to observers who place themselves outside of it; hence the image which was reflected back to it was strictly psychological. But spontaneous behavior, by passing to the reflective state, loses its innocence and the excuse of immediacy; one must be responsible for it, or one must alter it. It was, to be sure, a world of courtesy and ceremony which was offered to the reader, but he was already emerging from this world since he was invited to know it and to recognize himself in it. In this sense, Racine was not wrong when he said apropos of *Phèdre*

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that "the passions are presented before your eyes only to show all the disorder of which they are the cause." At least insofar as one does not take it to mean that his express purpose was to inspire a horror of love. But to paint passion is already to go beyond it, already to shed it. It is not a matter of chance that, about the same time, philosophers were suggesting the idea of curing oneself of it by knowledge. And as the reflective practice of freedom when confronted by the passions is usually adorned with the name of *morals,* it must be recognized that the art of the seventeenth century was eminently a moralizing art. Not that its avowed aim was to teach virtue, nor that it was poisoned by the good intentions which produce bad literature; but by the mere fact that it quietly offered the reader his own image, made it unbearable for him. Moralizing: this is both a definition and a limit. It moralized and that was *all*; if it proposed to man that he transcend the psychological toward the moral, it was because it regarded religious, metaphysical, political, and social problems as solved; but its action was nonetheless "orthodox." As it confounded universal man with the particular men who were in power, it did not dedicate itself to the liberation of any concrete category of the oppressed; however, the writer, though completely assimilated by the oppressing class, was by no means its accomplice; his work was unquestionably a liberator since its effect, within this class, was to free man from himself.

(*Translated by Bernard Frechtman*)

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Alexander Rasumovsky

THE SOVIET LITERARY PURGE

The purge of the Soviet Authors' Union, which started in the middle of August, 1946, is continuing. By now one can say that it by far surpasses any similar measures taken during the past decade. The offensive has been launched against a conglomeration of writers whose only common characteristic is their deviation (in any direction) from the post-war party line, but they may be divided into six groups (though we are quite willing to admit that one may even subdivide them into further categories):

(1) Those who were too much influenced by the West: former "Serapion Brethren." Journalists who visited Central Europe and whose reports did not treat conditions there with the required disdain.
(2) Satire at the expense of bureaucracy and the government: Zoshenko.
(3) "Pure poetry"; Akhmatova, Pasternak, Ilya Selvinsky.
(4) "Pessimism," *Weltschmerz*: Knorre.
(5) Demands for more freedom: Panferov, Panch, Grossman.
(6) Nationalism (non-Russian): Ukraine, Tatar Republic, and one case of Russian nationalism: Sergeyev Zensky.

Let us consider these different groups.

(1) In the resolution of the Soviet Authors' Union (*Pravda,* 22.8.46), we read: "Zoshenko, who worked during the first few years of Soviet power in the group of 'Serapion Brethren,' a group alien to the Soviet people and to Soviet literature. . . ."

The "Serapion Brethren" were a group of young writers centered in Leningrad around 1920, and among them were such outstanding figures of Soviet literature as Tikhonov, Fedin, Vsevolod Ivanov, Sejfulina, Kaverin, Nikitin, etc. Their ideological leader was Leo Luntz,

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who died young. He had impressed them with the motto: "To the West," since he was convinced that the Soviet writers must draw inspiration from Western models. Although they were not party members, they stood fully on the side of the Soviet regime. Their adversaries—the proponents of "proletarian culture"—failed and were finally (1932) disavowed by the Government.

In the meantime, the Serapion Brethren had dissolved as a group, each of them going his own way. One may say, though, that they retained one thing in common—a certain broadmindedness, an avoidance of the provincialism of most other writers. It is true that Western influence on them gradually diminished, and finally almost ceased to exist. However, if the Serapion Brethren are attacked today as a group and as individuals, the main reason is the fact that the patriotic ideology of today demands a complete return to Russian literature, which is now to be considered the greatest in the world.

However, several younger writers have been attacked as "Westerners." "A number of works have been published, whose spirit was that of cringing before everything foreign" (*Literaturnaya Gazetta,* 3.9.46). . . . This is aimed at certain war correspondents (Slavin, Agapov, etc.) who went to Germany and Austria in 1945-46, where they were astonished to find that reality was different from what they had been taught in Russia. Above all, they were impressed by the general cultural level in Central Europe, and of course these feelings were voiced in their reports.

The accusation of Westernism was also leveled against Soviet dramatists and producers. The May issue of *The Bolshevik* had already stated: "The enthusiasm shown for foreign authors in our theaters cannot be considered as normal. These plays have no artistic value and are alien to the spirit of the Soviet public. The taste of the Soviet public is ambitious and not everything that is popular abroad will appeal to the Soviet theater-goer." We believe that this "enthusiasm" can easily be explained (the chief attractions were Maugham, Swinnerton, and the old Eugène Sue). Soviet dramatic production has sunk to so low a level during the past few years that recourse had to be taken to foreign playwrights if the theaters were to stay open at all. However, another reason was that the plays of these bourgeois authors were, after all, not so "alien" to the theater-going public as has been claimed. Perhaps the demands and taste of the Soviet

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bureaucracy (and a good part of the intelligentsia) are not really so different from those of the New York or London public.

It is not hard to understand the reason for this struggle against Westernism. The official ideology—Soviet patriotism and Russian national pride—does not leave room for foreign influence. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."

(2) The case of Zoshenko. In his pamphlet, *Twenty-five Years of Soviet Literature,* Alexey Tolstoy made some apt remarks about Zoshenko. "The crafty, clever, and charming prose of Zoshenko, with his self-abasing hero-philistine, mocked and pitied by the author, was born in the atmosphere of the contradictions of the NEP. Only yesterday, we saw Zoshenko's hero in the restaurant and in the streetcar: *the NEP merchant, this caricature of the European bourgeois,* this cunning rascal of an opportunist. Today, he does not exist any more." Alexey Tolstoy only forgot to mention one small fact: the NEP merchant was not Zoshenko's only object. Thus, Zoshenko loved to describe the early type of Soviet bureaucrat: deceitful, bootlicking to his superiors, unbearable to his subordinates. Does this type still exist today? Of course it does, but it has matured, developed, and multiplied. It is no longer permissible to criticize the bureaucrat of today....

This leads us to a central problem of Soviet literature: government-licensed satire. Satire (e.g., magazines like *Krokodile*) serves as a safety valve for popular dissatisfaction with the general shortcomings. However, there are certain rules in this game which it is dangerous to disregard: (*a*) If you critize, your attacks should be aimed against anything foreign; (*b*) It is foolhardy to expose yourself too much. Never be the first to say anything; (*c*) Never attack anyone in an influential position without making sure that there is no objection from someone still higher up.

Zoshenko is a satirist by nature, and he seems to have had too much backbone; he could not stick to all the rules of the game. He wrote a play and a novel about the GPU: *The Story of One Life* and *Restored Youth.* Both were not above the average, but were warmly praised by Soviet critics. One can easily imagine that Zoshenko suffered because he could not write as he really wanted to. He could not bear his fate quietly—something very unhealthy in the Soviet Union. Result: a bad "relapse"—a pessimistic, slightly psychoanaly-

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tical autobiography (epithets provided by Soviet critics). During the war, when writers were given a little rein, Zoshenko made a cautious and not very successful attempt at a return to his real domain: humoristic short stories. He also wrote a novel, *The Adventures of an Ape,* which was not exactly a masterpiece, but did not arouse any sharp criticism or dislike in official quarters. His books were printed in large editions by the best-known publishers.

Let us now see what the critics have to say after the purge had started. "Harmful influence," "base and wicked canard on the Soviet people and the Soviet regime," "alien to Soviet literature, Zoshenko, to his disgrace, took no part in the case of the Soviet people even during the years of the patriotic war," "dirty, calumnious," etc. Zoshenko was expelled from the Soviet Writers' Union.

(3 and 4) The "Pure Artists" and the "Pessimists." Among the "expelled" we find Anna Akhmatova, among the "attacked" Boris Pasternak—the two greatest living Russian lyric writers—if one does not consider Simonov's *Jdi Menya* (Wait for Me) as the most perfect expression of lyric. They are accused of writing poetry that has no relation to reality and the present. Anna Akhmatova is described as "bourgeois-aristocrat" (the critics are not very precise in their "marxist" analysis), "mystical," "decadent," "unimaginative," etc. Let us add one more crime: Anna Akhmatova is one of the very few Soviet authors who has never (!) written anything about Stalin. Anna Akhmatova never occupied herself with politics—during the years 1923-1939 she maintained complete silence. Neither is Pasternak a "politician" by nature, but it was easier for him to find a road to revolutionary lyric ("Lieutenant Schmidt," "Kremlin 1918") than to the GPU lyric of the Stalinist epoch. During the last decade, therefore, he mainly worked as a translator (Shakespeare, Asiatic folk literature).

Actually, the accusation of "unpolitical" and "unimaginative" writing is not meant very seriously. The rulers of Soviet Russia know very well that a good lyric writer will probably never make a good "politician" or ideologist. Thus, if Akhmatova were to write popular verses read by the masses of workers and peasants, she would be allowed to be even more apolitical. Unfortunately, Akhmatova is mostly read by the intellectual youth, and this youth must on no account be influenced apolitically, since it is they who have the neces-

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sary education that might possibly lead them ideologically astray. . . . One of the critics calls a spade a spade: "harmful in the education of the young generation."

Akhmatova and Pasternak belong to the old generation, who started to write before the revolution. But, strange to say, we hear similar words of disapproval about quite young poets. One of the main problems is pessimism. In present-day Russia there are apparently so many reasons for pessimism that optimism had to be officially proclaimed compulsory in literature. The official ideology is: the present is so happy and the future so rosy that there cannot be any pessimistic works. This official optimism is by no means original. At the time of Nicholas I we encounter a similar tendency: *"Le passé de la Russie est admirable, le present est plus que magnifique—quant à son avenir, il est au delà de tout ce que l'imagination la plus hardie peut se figurer."* Yet, despite the rosy future, we hear in the year 1946: "In the work of a few young poets has appeared a morbid joy in suffering and mortification. Several experienced writers have pessimistic undertones" (*Pravda,* 8.9.46). The season for this declaration of war on the weak-minded is obvious: present material and spiritual conditions of life in Russia are so miserable that people would despair without the hope in a better future.

(5) The Critics. Let us select three more or less typical cases: Petro Panch, Vasilii Grossman, and Panferov.

The Ukrainian Panch is a member of the Presidium of the Authors' Union in his homeland. This, however, has not protected him from slaps from right and left, after he demanded the "freedom to err" in an article several months ago. He meant the freedom to make mistakes without immediate punishment—in other words more freedom for the artist. One can only wonder—although this demand is fully justified—how he could muster the courage to make such a request in the Soviet Union in 1946? During the war years, there was a vague feeling among Russian writers (especially those fighting in the frontlines) that after the war everything must change, that there would be greater freedom. They saw that the political and military leadership made mistakes (mistakes which were dearly paid for by the Soviet people)—why should they be forbidden to commit much less important blunders? This was a fatal illusion. Notwithstanding their easy material position in the Soviet Union, these authors

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should have been aware of their social position. For the bureaucracy, literature does not exist for the development of "new" and "liberal" ideas, but simply for the bolstering up of morale. This, of course, is nothing new, but a few writers had apparently forgotten it. They were reminded of the fact by an editorial in *Pravda* (4.9.46) which said, in connection with the literary purge:

"The struggle for the realization of Stalin's new five-year plan is intensifying. In this struggle, no one must stand aside. Every Soviet citizen—peasant, worker, official, intellectual, artist—must be an active fighter for the accomplishment of this plan, and a real fighter is only good if he is courageous and believes in his case, fearless of difficulties. The teaching of these valuable qualities is the most important task of the party organizations, the PRIMARY TASK OF SOVIET LITERATURE AND ART. . . ."

Vasilii Grossman who, during the war years, had been praised to the skies, has now published a play, *Shall We Believe the Pythagoreans?* (written in 1940-41), in which he supports the theory that nothing changes essentially, that everything returns—and applies it to modern Russia, showing that today's bureaucrat very much resembles the bureaucrat of Czarist times. Anyone can imagine what official criticism had to say to this, after overcoming the first stunned speechlessness in the face of so much impertinence. . . .

Panferov's case is similar. He fought at the front from the first days of the war, and saw with his own eyes that the Russian victory was not solely due to the glorious leadership of Stalin and the party. In the periodical *Oktiabr* (No. 5, 1946), he wrote that it was still not clear what forces had won victory. He said that such doubts do not exist for the official ideologists; for them everything is clear. For them, there has never been any retreat except a planned one; the fate of the country was never threatened; it would be the best thing to forget that there was ever any fighting around Stalingrad and Moscow. No, he said, one cannot write a book about the real war if one describes nothing but the victorious advance of the Red Army, with the official hurrahs, songs, and Cossack dances.

This liberal deviation was, of course, dealt with appropriately.

(6) The Nationalists. It is noteworthy that dozens of Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Tatars, etc., have been attacked for nationalist tendencies—but only *one* book by a Great-Russian writer.

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Thus, a Ukrainian History of Literature issued by the Ukrainian Academy (authors: Maslov and Kiriliuk) is criticized as follows:

a) It describes Ukrainian literature as unconnected with the class struggle.

b) It considers the national factor as decisive.

c) It ignores the positive influence of Russian literature on Ukrainian.

d) It does not mention the Ukrainian-Russian literary ties and exaggerates the influence of Western European literature.

The first point is not really important, since "historical materialism" as a method was given up in the Soviet Union many years ago. How can one explain the deviations of the Ukrainians? They misunderstood the patriotic line of the last fifteen years, believing themselves to possess the same rights as the Great Russians. They should have known that, although patriotism and nationalism do exist, there is only one kind: the licensed Soviet (Great-Russian) patriotism. It should also be taken into account that during the war, to counteract the German propaganda machine, the Ukrainian nationalists were given more freedom. Now that this danger no longer exists, we witness a return to cultural centralism.

Similar reproaches have been made against many other Ukrainian writers and poets, as well as representatives of other Soviet peoples. The criticism was invariably the same: non-Russian nationalism, stress on the hostility (and not friendship) between these peoples and the Great Russians in the past. Some Uzbeks, Tatars, etc. (Shukurov, Kassimov, Tadjibayev) were also accused of having glorified princes and khans. In this connection it will be recalled that during the past few years, dozens of novels, plays, and poems were published about Ivan IV, Peter I—and nobody dared say a word against their glorification.

The only book by a Great Russian author which suffered the same fate was *Brussilov Offensive* by Sergeyev Zensky. It appeared in 1943, was published in huge editions, and was described by the critics as one of the greatest achievements of Soviet literature. Thus, its condemnation came after a delay of some three years, after Mr. Zensky had made a few hundred thousand roubles on it. We cannot devote much space to its contents, but there is no doubt that, even for Soviet conditions, it was more than an average scandal. It justified the very

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thing that was violently opposed by the Bolsheviks during that time—the Russian offensive of 1916-17. If Zensky had written about the nineteenth century or even the 1904-5 war in the same style, it would no doubt have passed without criticism. But to side with Czarism in events that occurred a few months before the October Revolution—this was a little too much! Above all, it stood in striking contrast with the famous party history, which could not suddenly be withdrawn. Considering these facts, the reprobation meted out to Zensky was rather mild.

The new "literary Czars" who have emerged from the purge are Simonov, Fadeyev, Gorbatov, Vishnevsky, Korneichuk. All of them are from thirty-five to forty-five years old, party members, and mediocre writers, good propagandists who can write fluently about problems of the day. Their works are successful at the time of their appearance, but are completely forgotten two years later in spite of all the propaganda efforts made for them. They are able to portray reality faithfully (i.e., in such a manner as is demanded at any particular period), but do not possess any original ideas, personality, or other distinction. Under their leadership, nothing will change in Soviet literature—it will inevitably sink further, in the same direction that it has been going for the past fifteen years.

A purge can accomplish only so much. One can expel writers and imprison them. One can forbid them to write about certain themes and in a certain style. One can order them to write about certain themes and in a given style. One can also give orders that great works of art must be written (as in Russia today). We have seen the outcome.

The Soviet press contradicts the theory prevalent among its authors that no great works about the present should be expected from contemporaries, but that these can only be produced by future generations. This is certainly a harmful theory, but does anyone pose the question *why* the writers are such defeatists? Where else in the world has there ever been such a "theory"? The answer is obvious: either there is a whole generation of untalented writers in Russia—or: conditions in present-day Russia make it impossible to create valuable works of art. We do not doubt that the second alternative is correct.

What use can there be, under these circumstances, in demanding

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that "every theater should during every season perform at least two or three plays of a good standard about modern Soviet themes" (*Pravda,* 2.9.46)? What is to be done if such plays are not written—cannot be written?

Nobody would seriously claim that a great artist must be a great personality, of "good" character, etc. Goethe and many others would not have come up to these standards. But there are certain minimum requirements: he must have a minimum of character, a minimum of artistic freedom and of possibilities for development. A great many works of art were created by order ("social" or "direct"). However, in England of the sixteenth century (Shakespeare), in Holland of the seventeenth century (Rembrandt), in Austria of the eighteenth century (Haydn, Mozart) as well as in Weimar around 1800 (Goethe and Schiller), these minimum requirements were fulfilled. In Russia, under the GPU dictatorship, this has not been the case.

One can easily foretell what will be the tasks of Soviet literature in the five-year plans to come: articles and sketches on the "socialist construction," popular poems, translations from Uzbek and Turkmenian. If they wish to distinguish themselves, authors may write historical novels (in the style of Sir Walter Scott or possibly Alexey Tolstoy senior—in the best of cases), since it is less risky to write about the past than about the present. It is the task of the five-year plans to transform Russia into the greatest industrial power of the world. Whether this is possible we do not know. Too many factors are involved. However, the bureaucracy will undoubtedly achieve one thing: it will make Soviet literature the poorest, dullest, and most worthless in the world. It is approaching this goal today—another one or two little purges—and it will be attained!

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Mary Otis Hivnor

BARRAULT AND ARTAUD

The theater is the only institution in France which may be said to have benefited from the war. Deprived of all else during the occupation, people could still go to the theater at night, forget their anxieties, and often find in the plays themselves a veiled expression of their unexpressed indignation towards the Germans. It was during this period that the Comédie Française seems to have reached a peak with productions like Claudel's *Le Soulier de Satin* and Obey's *Noah,* and it is out of this period that Jean-Louis Barrault developed, rebelling from the Comédie, and breaking away to found his own theater. It is curious that France, devastated by the war, should be fertile soil for an important young director with a new convention. But perhaps the chief instigator of this convention is a man who wrote before the war, and in a sense prophesied it, Antonin Artaud.

Almost unknown outside of France, Artaud had a theater of his own during the twenties, and wrote a book, *Le Théâtre et son Double* (published in 1938), which had great influence on a small literary and theater world. The fact that he has been insane for the last eight years is no dampener to his surrealist admirers who dragged him out of his asylum a while ago to give a lecture. But Artaud's most valuable ideas, the ideas which have influenced playwrights and directors, are all expressed in his book. It shows the importance of drama in primitive society, its closeness to magic and ritual, and the importance of symbolism in ritual theater. Artaud was fascinated by Barrault's early mimes, since they seemed to be the very expression of his own conception of theater.

Barrault was originally known as a mime, and taught the art for several years at Charles Dullin's school. In the French film *Les Enfants du Paradis* he gives excellent examples of both the fool

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and the harlequin. One generally thinks of mime in connection with *commedia dell'arte,* with the acrobatic activities of Arlecchino or Zanni, or of Molière's Sganarelle, but Barrault uses it to a greater or lesser extent in all his productions. His comparatively naturalistic production of Salacrou's *Les Nuits de la Colère* depicts modern people in casual attitudes, but here there is a formality to the casualness, a control, an awareness which never appears on a Broadway stage. When Eddie Dowling makes a casual entrance in *The Glass Menagerie* the audience sits back and smiles; we are fond of "naturalness." When Barrault makes a casual entrance there is a tension in the audience hard to explain. Here there is a meaning to every step, a force behind the casualness which suggests the violence of a ritual. A good example is in the play within the play in his production of his own and Gide's adaptation of *Hamlet.* The fascination of the spectacle makes it actually a "thing to catch the fancy." The queen's stiff gestures of affection, the position of the king, lying down with his neck twisted and his ear up ready to receive the poison, and the grotesque primitive steps of the brother are all done, to the accompaniment of Honegger's oriental-sounding music, as a kind of charm suggesting the earliest origins of ritual: the killing of the old king at the end of the old year. To revive the primitive power of theater, to re-establish its importance at the core of human expression is to rediscover the primordial power of symbols, rhythm, gesture, and voice, and to return to the basic qualities of ceremony.

Symbolism is practically unknown in the Western theater. The Chinese theater in the Bowery is probably the only one in America to use the language of the theater as such. Chinese actors, originally imitators of marionettes, here still represent this sculptural quality in broad, plastic movements. The décor is hypothetical. A chair can be anything according to its position and the actors' relation to it. A costume will signify a character's age, the color of his mask his personality, and the size of his step his mood. The Balinese theater, built like the Chinese on a vocabulary of symbols incomprehensible to the Western world, is considered by Artaud to be "pure" in the sense that it has no existence whatever off the stage.

The visual element in our theater has apparently degenerated to the purely decorative. The tremendous number of plays easily transcribed to radio suggest that the spectacle itself is merely an

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illustration of the dialogue. Barrault has revolted against this conception. Having no symbolic convention, his is necessarily eclectic and personal, but this does not diminish its effect. His stage directions for a production of Racine's *Phèdre* show his method of formulating a production. "On one side, sunlight, the marine air; on the other, dark corners given by walls, by arches. . . . In this country of light, one seeks the shadows, one hides oneself therein. The nights are white: Sleep has fled, and, during the day, men wander about like sleep-walkers. . . . There are nightmares in Trézène. The task of the decorator therefore resides in a wise division of shadows and lights." Another production conceived in *clair obscur* is his *Hamlet.* Here the setting and most of the costumes are gray, a color which can represent opulence as well as mourning. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are costumed in the same color as the walls to indicate their self-effacement. Only Ophelia is colorfully dressed in the mad scene, in vivid tones to match the wildness of the episode. Shapes are equally significant. In *Hamlet* the ragged tops of the throne room walls, reproduced in the king's crown, give a feeling of hypocrisy hard to analyze. The setting of *Les Nuits de la Colère* folds up before your eyes, indicating the flimsiness on which the whole Vichy regime, the subject of the play, was based. The setting for his production of Kafka's *The Trial* (adapted by Gide and himself) is built on two levels, the upper corresponding to Kafka's freedom, the lower—a long claustrophobic tunnel—to his guilt.

The Chinese Bowery theater also gives a good example of a purely theatrical use of music and sound. Percussion instruments underscore the rhythm of the actor's movements, changing with his mood; wind instruments prolong and intermingle with his cries, and suddenly a gong will crash through with the vibrations of a pulse. In the Western theater sound is added as a part of the illusory recipe. In the sound-library of a film company, "heartbeats" is catalogued below "hand-grenades" and above "horses-hoofs" and cut into the picture about as mechanically as the title music. Barrault's theater revives an animistic use of sound. In his stage-noted edition of Claudel's *Le Soulier de Satin,* after a plaintive opening monologue a music note reads: "All the orchestra then replies to this complaint, like one heart, with languor, that it 'knows everything,' " and below, "The orchestra begins a long series of themes suggesting the sea

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with its goings and comings." In the *Hamlet* production a sound introduces each appearance of the ghost—very much as in oriental usage. From the audience a ringing seems to rise inside one's head and the drumbeat is indistinguishable from one's pulse. The growing sensation of a supernatural presence strengthens with the heightening of the pitch and loudness until the ghost appears. But the production of *The Trial* goes furthest in this respect. On the one hand, the mechanical sounds of typewriter and bells correspond to the rhythm of the Machine Age; on the other, the chaotic human sounds of mumbling voices mixed with groaning and breathing as in a dream correspond to the hero's own subconscious. Barrault seems to be capable of reproducing by sounds the very tension of a guilt-feeling.

Artaud is particularly violent about the way the possibilities of the human voice are ignored by the Western theater. "Today in the theater the dialogue is everything and there is no possibility outside of it; so that the theater becomes a branch of literature, a sort of resonant variety of language." He proposes that we abolish naturalistic dialogue and return to a primitive use of words, "consider language as a form of incantation." Perhaps this has something to do with the reappearance of monologues in many recent French productions. In Dullin's production of Salacrou's *La Terre est Ronde,* Savonarola, as a tremendous door above the stage opens, appears and, looking scornfully down over the city, speaks to God, to Florence, or to himself. Jouvet's production of Giraudoux's *La Folle de Chaillot* is interrupted in the middle by a simple little statement or declaration of piety given by the young waitress. In Maurice Jaquement's fine production of Lorca's *Maison de Bernarda* the crazy grandmother appears near the end and curses her house while performing a sort of magic dance. The monologue, coming at a high pitch in the play, is by its very nature close to either prayer or incantation. The actor, forced into communication with the audience, himself, or something supernatural, assumes the role of high priest and his language is like the language of alchemy. Barrault is particularly conscious of the actor's voice. In the *Hamlet* production the ghost gives separate life to his words, the terrible tools of a sorcerer; the actor's first speech, done in the exaggerated style of the Comédie Française, has the savage quality of a crying beast. Ophelia chants her final song as a brutal nursery-rhyme jingle. In every case the actor's voice plunges

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into a primordial level out of the realm of conversation. In Artaud's words, "It consists in giving the words about the same importance that they have in dreams."

It is a question whether Barrault was more influenced by Artaud or Artaud by Barrault. In his final chapter Artaud describes a Barrault production: "The theater which opens a physical field demands that this field be filled, that it be furnished with gestures, that it be made to live magically in itself . . . that new relations be discovered between sound, gesture, and voice. . . . It may be said that this is the theater that J.-L. Barrault has created," and with this last tribute he seems to appoint his friend to carry out his doctrines. Barrault has, in fact, found a theater style which is, in a violently self-conscious way, symbolic and ceremonious. Above all it is a theater built around the actor. From the technical point of view, by the use of mime, he has realized the "super-marionette" of Gordon Graig, who wished to get rid of the natural voice and gesture and put the actor on an unrealistic plane. But far from "eliminating" the actor, Barrault has increased his importance: "The theater is not the meeting place of dialogue, lighting, and gestures, but of voices, displacements, and actions which, coming from a human being, constitute the true material of dramatic art. . . . The actor contains three principal centers: the spinal column, the lungs, and the heart. That is to say, he's an instrument which breathes and throbs and maintains permanently the obsessive rhythm of a sorcerer." Sorcerer or priest? The medieval mime, hero of the farces and soties, was condemned as as evil influence and forbidden Christian burial. The Greek mime, Stupidus, wearing big ears and a phallus, immitated vile actions and appealed to the baser instincts, yet he was gifted with the fool's golden mouth and had much in common with the Greek chorus leader. But the earliest origin of mime is also the origin of tragedy. The Dionysian rituals made no distinction between comedy and tragedy, and the sorcerer was the priest. "What does it matter," says Artaud, "if Barrault has re-established a religious spirit through descriptive and profane means, since everything which is authentic is sacred?"

This return to a magic theater is significant. Artaud has described the theater as *"fléau vengeur,"* an *"épidémie salvatrice."* "If the theater is essentially like the plague, it is not because it is contagious, but because like the plague it is the revelation, the exposing, the push

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towards the exterior of a depth of latent cruelty by which all the perverse possibilities of the mind are localized in one individual or in a people." Curiously enough this theory of Artaud's has influenced the existentialist theater. But what the existentialist theater ignores is the role of hero or "sorcerer" at the core of Artaud's theater.

Sartre's characters, unlike Chekhov's or Odets', are not duped by normal family surroundings or illusions of importance. The uselessness of their existence is not only shown by what they are in society, but in their realization and overt expression of it, and when the coward in *Huis Clos* makes his entrance and demands *"où sont les bourreaux?"* the endlessness of his suffering is perfectly clear to him. The Negro in *La Putain Respectueuse* hasn't the slightest illusion of altering his condition as do the three Negroes in the three recent Broadway productions dealing with the same problem. It is refreshing to see the traditionally French lucid consciousness in process of examining itself, but Sartre's characters have only a complex of thoughts and reflexes which continue without end, a cycle of absurdity, and the intensity is that of a neurotic obsession. With Sartre there is no hero; the victim never sees the reason for his suffering, and in fact never seems to evolve at all. Sartre is presenting plays that deal with *"angoisse,"* "cruelty," and "absurdity" as abstract ideas only. The actors seem unpowerful and mechanical, and the convention remains as illusory as ever.

But when Artaud speaks of the theater as *"fléau vengeur"* he is referring to the medium. It is the voice that speaks the word, the pure use of theater which will influence the spectator. In praising the oriental theater he says, "It is a theater which eliminates the author to the profit of what in our theatrical jargon is called the director, but here he becomes a sort of magic relegator, a master of sacred ceremonies." Barrault might be thus considered as a master of magic ceremonies, and priest of a new convention. His production of *The Trial* is an example of a case where a director in search of a play is forced to create his own, and the emphasis is on the production rather than the text. With Gide he has arranged the episodes into dramatic form. All the chaos and absurdity which Sartre offers through ideas, Barrault offers through voice, mime, lighting, and décor. The dream atmosphere is created by the timelessness and irrational order of the scene sequences, the crowd movements provide

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a sense of suffocation, the sound effects a feeling of terror, and the actors have all the significance of dream characters. The absurdity of the modern bureaucratic world is better expressed by a pair of hands balancing matchboxes one on top of the other than by much of the abstract dialogue of Sartre. The play builds in intensity, the atmosphere becoming more and more suffocating until the execution finally clears the air; for the actor there is climax and epiphany. By mime, by an oriental type of symbolism and convention, but most of all through the dynamic power that hundreds of years ago would have branded him as sorcerer, Barrault approaches in his productions the violence of primitive ritual.

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Chester Kallman

STORM AT CASTELFRANCO

THE MAN:

The sower is deed, do not harass him, he
For answering holds but little
Grace: indeed no singer of his theme, no prophet
By intention, a lover less,
He is for all time over us, all Love,
And awkwardly though we sing it
Our song is his, our song is questioning. Here
Abundant lies about me
His planted rage, a country peace unending—
What though he build? this hush
May freely dip to a purl or clamber to a roar;
Those arches he has scattered
From his hand center no city, magnify
No spoil, but heighten well
His errant love's horizons. O nubile green,
Featureless as a vow
That is past crumpled faces and unhingèd limbs,
Allow my worried touch
A moment here that I may be for him
A bristling ambassador
And absolute. His dawn is strangely everywhere;
Then why, white and rose,
Spurts to my eyes a light well known by which
Darkness may show her hand?
I am and I believe and with nativity am strong,
And yet to find it as to find
The rumor in a sea shell a veracious wave, is not
The same. Nothing is the same

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Since Lust for Love has mothered such a passion
She swears that she would die
A million times for him, and does; grafts
In his name her boundaries over
The earth. Battlements rise, warfare is proclaimed
In urban gutterals, and on
What little is left still she cuts the gardens that she says
Are holy: hedges trained
To slash the unwary, shaven lawns, a patch
Of flowers piping in her courtship
Language, and standing pools that mock eternity.
Then, drunken with success, she stands
The infant God there and cries "This is your Love":
And he, complacently:
"I frighten the birds with my baldness and obvious delight
In remaining completely my own
Rigid master. Daubed with the blood of worship,
A grim scarlet image,
Scythe in my right hand, member in my left, wreathed
With roses, deathless, amazingly
Hideous I stand, unfazed by laughter, chiding
Or folly, whom Phidias did not polish
Nor Scopas carve, but the will of a rustic shaped
Of a fig tree: Priapus Lignum,
The son of lovely malignant gracious Venus,
Weal and punisher of the soul,
And reeling Bacchus, contriver of the brain's unsated
Loves. But mine alone
Are the shouts given dancing and running, *Io*
Mutunus, Io Triphallus;
And I, the *and* so lively in man-and-wife,
Am guardian of reins and gardens
Against rapacious hands." Is this our pride,
Our blessing and our gift? Could then
My hands throttle that croak and kill him once
For all, how soon in glory
They would: and she may tremble too recalling
The death of Semele, tremble

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To shade her softness with a sharper lure. Observe
How, having done, she rests
Under the sky at peace, a paradise
Of modesty, and hides
The division she is bound to serve—as though
All Love might find his object
There. Yet shut your eyes in safety: in our descent
Trees may turn black
And singing choke the wind, but you will know us
Better as panting we take
A little hill. For have you not seen quite well,
As we, great Jove himself
Itching to a fault, bundled in down, arched for
Gabble and hiss, a subject
Of doors, human at last a fool? O Love
Who walk no level of the winds'
Imagined realm, darken your face and to our use
A while, though grumbling, lend
An indulgent light. We know, we know the ache
Survives the bluntest carnival
Though every ribbon in our infant caps play dead;
We know how soon we shall
Ape the burnt phoenix, temper the grimace
Into a smile and lean
Amiably on the reaping will: how soon again
You must come to this.

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Edward McGehee

A PAGEANT OUT OF MIDNIGHT

Leonardo's parade was a noble affair, men once said,
Including wine casks, ribald goats and ivied trumpets blowing,
But as he stood upon the balcony to await the festal float
Years of labor faced the taut, pore-golden skin poised
Deftly, yet prepared for the nervous sigh of exactitude;

Across all time similar events have happened
For neither in stones, nor in the string of words
Can the question of life be changed, but, but
Will it be noticed in the figleaf's broad simplicity
Or in the caressing sag of a movable tent?

Proven: Stolen-by-night-stones can make
A definite face memorable within the lull of wars,
Between the wave beats along the shores of France;
This is not the gargoyle stare watching over Lourdes
For that calls to mind the praised fool's hands;

But in each country, each region, parades and faces have been.
Then why should one, instead of Tintoretto, think of Leonardo?
Memory is a violent affair, as well as a sudden decision,
But legend says the gilded cherubim
Vine-wilted in the midst of their circus-sun-feat.

It's still true that some people are born with sadness
While others acquire it in their late-morning dreams,
But Leonardo and the wandering French king of Thebes
Learned long before the circus mothers' sadness
How wine never removes gilt from the image of a face.

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THE JUENGER CASE: A COMMUNICATION

Dear Sirs: Rebounding from an excessive rejection of things German we are now in danger of forgetting our lessons and falling for an indiscriminate Germanophilism. The recent discovery of Ernst Juenger provides a case in point. Comparatively unknown outside Germany until recently, Juenger has suddenly been "discovered" by literary circles in England and in this country. His only novel, *Auf den Marmorklippen,* has just appeared here in an English translation, heralded as one of the most significant anti-Nazi products to come out of Germany.

PR has contributed its share to this discovery of Juenger. Mr. Clair's article (September-October 1947), more critical and penetrating than others on the subject, invites comment for two reasons: (1) Mr. Clair subscribes to the uniqueness of Juenger. Juenger is described as having "probed more deeply into the complexities of modern civilization than any of his contemporaries among European writers"; (2) Mr. Clair also accepts the notion that Juenger eventually worked his passage home. His withdrawal from the Nazi regime is interpreted as signifying "a complete break with everything Juenger had stood for in the past." Thus his novel *On the Marble Cliffs,* his war diaries, and the post-war pamphlet *Der Friede* (The Peace) are now recognized not only as documents of high literary distinction, but also as significant signposts in the post-Nazi ideological orientation of the German intelligentsia. By implication they have a meaning transcending the German scene. This "discovery," I submit, is uncritical and possibly dangerous.

Whatever one's judgment may be about Juenger's purely literary abilities, it is clear that the fame of his earlier writings rests on the ideological message intruding into every part of his work or, more precisely, on the peculiar, fascinating intermixture of a literature confined to the narrow scope of "extreme situations" and an ideology distilled from this literary work. Juenger's fame, in the twenties as now, lies in his being a literary *idéologue.* What then of this ideology; and what about the alleged change between the different phases of Juenger's work?

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Even if we follow Mr. Clair's distinction between "nihilism" and "traditionalism" as significant descriptions in the development of Juenger's work, I think that if we look behind these labels, we shall find that Juenger himself was quite right in insisting on the continuity of his ideological position: the nihilistic façade and the traditionalist vestment conceal the same ideological content.

For what was Juenger's nihilism? It was, of course, a violent rejection of every aspect of modern bourgeois society and ideology; but what matters is that it also carried a definite positive message: it glorified "war" as a metaphysical experience; glorified the birth of a new élite attuned to the "heroic" and "elemental" forces released by the war; glorified the reduction of the bourgeois individual to the technological automaton (the so-called "worker-type"); glorified the emergence of the "absolute state" capable of using these automatons for the purpose of total war. The "absolute state" was a combination of socialism and nationalism; socialism was defined as "the presupposition for the strictest authoritarian order," nationalism as "the presupposition for tasks of an imperial dimension." In this new order the happiness of the worker-type masses meant "service" and "sacrifice"; freedom meant "obedience" and "discipline."

I say "glorified" advisedly; for the crucial point is that, according to Juenger, this was not only a picture of the age as it is, but as it deserves to be, as it ought to be. What was unique in Juenger was his trick of identifying what is with what ought to be. He said in effect: this is my vision of the future, and I pronounce it the only future worth living for. Significantly enough, he did not consider this a nihilistic position at all, but stamped it with the affirmative label of "heroic realism."

This vision of the future came to him on the field of battle. In battle the individual becomes an automaton, a helpless extension of the material instruments of war, who can find expression only in the explosions of violence and death. But while it has been customary—though perhaps old-fashioned—to consider this extreme situation as the most complete alienation, humiliation, and degradation of individuality, Juenger could come to terms with this experience only by endowing it with the romantic ecstasy of an absolute value. In the structure of German society there were unfortunately large and powerful groups which could not make their peace with war and defeat on any other terms. Therein lay Juenger's strength and appeal in the twenties.

Does this make Juenger a Nazi or fascist? If by Nazi is meant active participation in the regime after 1933, then Juenger was *not*

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a Nazi; for he retired from the stage (which he had helped to set) after 1934. But a "fascist" (or possibly a national-bolshevist) he was in 1932, and *Der Arbeiter* (The Worker) is practically a textbook in straight fascist social mythology. Now it may be readily admitted that *On the Marble Cliffs,* the war diaries, and the pamphlet on the peace are (and were meant to be) anti-Nazi works; it is, however, an entirely different question whether these works really show a change of heart or whether they do not retain the outlines of Juenger's old social and personal philosophy—except for convenient terminological substitutions.

For what happened in the case of these later works? The forces of technological nihilism, embodied in the "absolute state," did not hesitate to turn against their own sponsor and, like the sorcerer's apprentice, Juenger suddenly discovered that he had lost the magic key for controlling the very forces which he himself had wished into existence and power. (In this respect, Juenger's fate is simply that of a "literary" Thyssen.) Thus he withdrew from the struggle, weathered the storm in a hermitage, and prepared the ground for a new type of absolutism.

In *On the Marble Cliffs,* the two brother-heroes are dedicated to the study of ancient books, manuscripts, precious flowers, stones, and minerals—at a time when the country in which they live is laid waste and enslaved by the High-Forester, allegorical symbol of Hitler. In the war diaries Juenger—marching into France as a leader of a company which, much to his ever-recurring regret, never sees action because the advance of German mechanized units obliterates the French campaign with a blitzkrieg—discovers the same kind of tradition. The absorption in the precious minutiae of the world of manuscripts, flowers, and minerals is not only an escape from the horrible realities of the world of man, but also the key to the safeguarding of human freedom, dignity, and value. In *Der Friede,* finally, Juenger makes explicit the transition from the world of private escapes into a new form of absolutism: the absolute state is replaced by an absolute theology, the technological élite by a theological élite, Germany's imperial tasks by the concept of occidental civilization; but except for these substitutions the underlying spirit is the same as ever: war is still the great metaphysical experience out of which the new theological order will be born; it creates a new élite—beyond good and evil (guilt and responsibility), beyond liberalism and authoritarianism, uniting victors and vanquished, transcending class and party differences; again the new order provides for the worker-type masses; again their happiness and freedom lie in the adjustment to a hierarchical order, in the exercise of obedience and discipline, in the performance of useful services.

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What kind of opposition to the Nazi experience do *On the Marble Cliffs* and the war diaries actually represent? To be sure, there is a critique of the evils which followed in the wake of the Nazi victory: personal insecurity, atomization of society, espionage, denunciations, terror, concentration camps. These evils can be found on the allegorical, medieval canvas if the reader looks for them. But none of the "evils" are ever depicted in their concrete form. The reader is "told" that such and such a thing of evil dimensions is happening in the fairyland of the Marble Cliffs; he never "sees" the evil in the pages of the book. The allegory assumes, as it were, the form of an old legend illustrating in some abstract form human weakness, disorder, and evil—thus removing it safely from the concrete human situation in which the reader lives and participates, so that the reader loses the sense of individual responsibility for the evil by which he is surrounded in his daily life.

Moreover, what are the forces of goodness and progress which fall victim to the machinations and violence of the High-Forester: on the one hand, anonymous peasants and shepherds, with no one performing (or capable of performing) a deed "noble" enough to be recorded; on the other hand, the figure of the great Chief Belovar, a peculiar mixture of ancient warlord and a modern von Mackensen. Belovar is the only representative of *active* resistance to the regime of the High-Forester—a strange representative of the forces which actually went to the concentration camps for their resistance to the Nazis.

Finally, what of the world of the two brother-heroes? Their palimpsests and herbariums are presumably meant to be a symbol for a new type of "humanism"; but if so, then this is a world to which anything genuinely human is alien. A life reaching the highest degree of humanity in collecting obscure flowers and deciphering ancient manuscripts (this is also the leitmotiv of the war diaries) may be an enviable existence when the world around us goes up in flames; but if there ever was a convenient alibi for one's own responsibility for and one's share in the general collapse, this is it with a vengeance. The masses are doomed; and nothing and nobody can help them. A new élite—the two Juenger brothers and the clerical brother Lampros—discover their allegiance to tradition and humanity, not through any concrete identification with human suffering or human aspirations for happiness, but in keeping a record of the doom of another civilization and preserving the eternal values distilled from a collection of flowers, stones, and ancient parchments. Again this fits into the Juenger "tradition." Never capable of creating a human character or situation which might serve as a focus for a work of imaginative prose, Juenger has always treated human

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beings in purely instrumental relations. In his early works they were nothing but objects to be manipulated in the processes of war and technology; in his later works, objects of the inanimate world exclusively. While evil is loose in the world, this type of humanist tradition elects to dissect and record, to collect and classify, to struggle for the precise word, the perfect phrase—much as the Nazis never failed to exploit the instrumental value of their victims and never failed to keep a beautiful administrative record of their "experiments" and exterminations. This may indeed be intended to convey an anti-Nazi attitude, an opposition to the evil in the world; what it reveals more basically, I think, is an attitude of making one's peace with such a world, of pronouncing one's own absolution for the evil it has generated.

To consider this a transition from nihilism to tradition, as Mr. Clair in PR did, is harmless as long as we state explicitly the continuity between *this form of nihilism* and *this type of tradition*. To consider it as anything else raises the question of whether we are not in danger of suspending critical judgment in order to make our peace with the forces behind this type of tradition.

Hans Meyerhoff

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NEW ROADS, NEW ROUTES, NEW LINES OF GOODS: AN IMAGINARY REVIEW

Smith, a struggling young writer, enters the study of Brown, who has given up the struggle.

S: Hail to thee, blithe critic! Bored thou never wert!

B: Oh, dear. Is that from your new novel?

S: No, just a flash of genius, inspired by your expression. What have you been up to?

B: Reading a book. Imagine, with books the way they are nowadays! This one has wafted me back to magic atmospheres. But what brings you?

S: A new chapter. Here it is. Let me know what you think of it.

B: Thanks. May I ask how old you are?

S: Twenty-four.

B: Ah, yes, the war generation. Ten years after mine, the depression generation. I wonder if any group ever felt so much older than one almost its own age. But after all, what a gulf! A depression is a nuisance; a war is an opportunity. Our generation rebelled against the *status quo;* yours fought for it. And some of us got mixed up in your fight, too. What a life! At least your crowd went into the war without disillusion.

S: That didn't help much.

B: No, but you're still resilient. You can believe that there were heroes before Agamemnon and good writers after Scott Fitzgerald. You don't go snatching at any writer, dead or alive, who seems to have stood for the integrity of literature in this century. You aren't plagued by our absurd fear that that integrity is gone forever.

S: What do you mean by the integrity of literature?

B: Something like sovereignty, I suppose. Not being governed by anything, even the *Zeitgeist.* Being able to use the *Zeitgeist,* transcend it, impress it, by creating something vividly individual and independent. By the way, are you an experimental writer?

S: I'm not sure what you mean by that either.

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B: Oh, blessed generation! May you conquer our confusions by sheer ignorance, like Parsifal. I hoped you might enlighten me; I'm still in the dark about that term, in spite of reading forty writers labeled experimental by their tireless champion and anthologist, James Laughlin. The reason you found me looking so dreamy is that this collection, called *Spearhead,** has brought to mind the extraordinary talents and achievements of four writers who were *enfants terribles* in my youth—Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, E. E. Cummings, and William Carlos Williams. It also contains work done by thirty-six other Americans, mostly younger, during what its editor calls the "decade of the fascist wars"; and if literature develops by experiment, as he claims, why do I feel that the best things in the book are by four people who matured before anyone heard of a fascist? Why do the other thirty-six, by comparison, induce claustrophobia? Of course, some of their work is experimental in the merest way, a compound of hesitancy and bravado, but . . .

S: Doesn't the editor define the term?

B: Well, he tries to suggest the nature of experimental writing by contrasting it with "conservative traditionalism" and "the middle road." Writers of these two types may contribute something new to literature, he says, and experimentalists are not necessarily better writers than middle-roaders, or even as good: they are important because they try to go beyond the technical limits within which the others are content to work. He instances Katherine Anne Porter, Allen Tate, Wallace Stevens as middle-roaders, but cites W. C. Williams and E. E. Cummings as "experimentalists to the marrow," who have "taken a different track," "driven all their lives toward new idioms and new metrics," and "spearheaded the forward movement of the larger body of workers in literature."

S: Time—marches ON! Excuse me.

B: Oh, don't apologize; that's the very note. Straight out of science fiction. Limits, basic forms, experiment, advance, body of workers. . . . Behold the writer in his laboratory, brooding over the parts of speech! For years he fiddles with retorts, trying out endless mixtures of ambiguities, rhyme-schemes, connotations, denotations, detonations, until at last he stumbles on a new direction and isolates a new element!

S: Steady, old head. First you say this book moves you to tears by reprinting your old bold loves; now you say it's all a fraud. What's wrong with you today?

* An anthology, recently published by New Directions, of ten years of experimental writing in America.

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B: I'll tell all, if you'll let me drop this scientific jargon and get back to plain old-fashioned jargon. I don't think literary experiment is a fraud unless it's cultivated, and I think we do far too much to cultivate it. Real experimenters aren't "different" because they want to be. A genuinely original writer is full of ideas and feelings and *Gestalten* that want desperately to come out pure, to be as intelligible to others as they are to him before he sits down to write. In the struggle to be both pure and intelligible he may even begin his career as a "conservative traditionalist," let alone the "middle road." Have you ever read anything more conventional than *Stephen Hero?* An original writer can exhaust the possibilities of a manner or an influence in the time it takes a lesser writer to absorb one. Then he may continue to work in that manner, with personal variations, or he may develop a new manner. But he won't try to "alter the basic nature of the forms," because he isn't interested in forms as such. He may be trying to alter the basic nature of people, but that's another story. Anyway, whether he "experiments" or not, he will end by establishing himself as a voice with an unmistakable timbre. Not unheard-of, but unmistakable once you have thoroughly heard it. Listen. "A bud forever green, / tight-curled upon the pavement, perfect / in juice and substance, but divorced, divorced / from its fellows, fallen low"—Who wrote that?

S: By elimination among your four favorites, hm . . . Williams?

B: If you read more, you could eliminate faster. Well, here's one you could tell by hearsay. "A light moves on the north sky line; / where the young boys prod stones for shrimp. / In seventeen hundred came Tsing to these hill lakes. / A light moves on the south sky line."

S: Hold, enough! Aren't you simply saying that a writer is original if he's original? If it's just a matter of recognizing his style, what's the difference between criticism and a quiz program?

B: Recognized, that's the word! Recognized with joy! Recognized so that you say, involuntarily, "That's it!" Oh, exquisitely put, my friend. Have you been reading Plato on reminiscence?—But your objection is sustained. Of course an unmistakable style is not a sure sign of originality. But that's what I'm trying to say! You advance literature by adding to it, not by trying to improve it. Literature doesn't grow; it increases. And what increases it? Originality, which is less obvious than experimentation, but much more visible. Well, enough of this groping for principles. It will never get us anywhere. That's one thing our two generations agree on, isn't it?

S: I'm not sure. It might get us nowhere, but out. *Omnia exeunt in mysterium.*

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B (*startled*): Where did you learn that?

S: It's in Joyce somewhere, I think.

B: Or Sartre, perhaps. But let's return to our muttons, and look at them from another angle. If experiment isn't originality, might it not have something to do with novelty? "The greater part of the work," says Mr. Laughlin of his selections, "is so richly original that it cannot be strictly classified; we do not possess the terms or the perspective." Well, I amused myself yesterday by classifying everything in the book, with varying degrees of strictness and any old terms and perspectives, the older the better. Here are the results:

I, Prose. A, Fiction. 1, *autobiographical*: Lowry—love in wartime; Nin—dreamlife of girlhood; Miller—man versus city; Goodman, Kerner, Schwartz—Jewish family life. 2, *fantastic-symbolic-philosophic*: Goodman—utopia; Abel—ironic self-analysis; O'Reilly, Clark, Patchen—satiric fantasy; Barnes, Saroyan—the predicament of man. 3, *social significance*: Georg Mann—political satire; Jones, Kaplan, Berryman—minority problems. 4, *epic*: R. P. Warren—slice of life in the Bible Belt. *B, Drama.* Tennessee Williams—atmospheric, Chekhovian; M. P. Hutchins—psychological, closet. *C, Documentary.* The American scene in words and photographs: Wright Morris; Agee and Evans. *D, Criticism.* Jolas—romantic manifesto; Tyler—art as social expression.

II, Poetry. 1, *philosophic*: W. C. Williams, Pound, Rexroth, Schwartz. 2. *religious*: Villa. 3, *satiric*: Ford, Wheelwright, Cummings. 4, *lyric at large* (momentary insight, description, passion, intimation, etc.): W. C. Williams, Schwartz, Villa, Wheelwright, Cummings, M. Moore, Rukeyser, O. Williams, S. Greenberg, Jarrell, Patchen, Rodman, Boyle, Miles, Tyler, Laughlin, Shapiro.

—Which takes care of them all except Stein. She has two pieces here that look like a play and a short story, but the resemblance is doubtless coincidental. Need we devise new terms for one writer out of forty?

S: Not unless they're better than the old ones.

B: But what would you do with better ones?—Well, so much for terms. Now let's take a look down some old perspectives. How about Leaders-and-Followers? Should an experimentalist follow anybody, and if so, how far? Hemingway, Joyce, Eliot, Auden are writ large all over this sort of book. Is this the independence of the pioneer? Naturally, he may try out other people's trails, but is that what makes him a pioneer? Then there's the Professional-and-Amateur, or Craftsman-and-Dabbler perspective. It's odd how many of the "unusual" short stories in these anthologies seem to be fiction by accident. "The

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Mohammedans" and "The Imaginary Jew" are cases in point. Excellent pieces, but they make me think of what Busoni called Schubert: "a gifted amateur." Hold them up to Chekhov, or even W. C. Williams' fiction, and they're rather transparent, don't you think? Well, what's left? Perhaps Mr. Laughlin's principles of selection adumbrate one of the new perspectives he calls for. If so, it would reveal Katherine Anne Porter as the shaft of a spear, but Eudora Welty as its head; Tate as a traditionalist, perhaps because he composes Odes; and Marianne Moore as more experimental than Wallace Stevens—because her lines are differently shaped, or because she writes about smaller animals? Alas, I fear that even this perspective is an odd variant of a really ancient one: Tradition-and-Innovation. "Nothing like a new song," says the younger generation in the *Odyssey*. . . . But you seem to be getting restive, so I'll sum up. Does new writing demand new terms and new perspectives? No. Does experiment mean anything except as an aspect of originality? No. Can originality be understood, or even sensed, without a grasp of literature as a whole? No. Was Goethe doddering when he said, "What is new is not true, and what is true is not new?" No. Which leaves us, also in his words, "as clever as we were before."

S (*explosively*): This is more than I can stand. I've been listening so far out of psychological curiosity, wondering how you would explain your emotions about this book; and all I get is antique blah about originality and noble voices and the great tradition. I'm only surprised that you haven't dragged in Memorable Speech, and Sweetness and Light, and Emotion Recollected in Tranquillity. All right, so some writers have more talent than others; so what? When you've got them all filed away in your bottomless pit, what the hell have you achieved? Have you enabled yourself or anyone else to appreciate these writers any better, or even to understand your own preferences? Classify, classify—that's all you bumbling pundits can do. What a way to spend a life—trying to prove that no one can possibly do anything unique!

B: Oh, come, come. I only made that catalogue to show that "experimental" writing is no harder to classify than any other kind, not that any kind is easy to classify. Also that there's no such thing as a better pigeon-hole, since there are no good ones in the first place.

S: Then why all the fuss about a few harmless phrases? If a man wants to call some writers experimental and others not, why shouldn't he, especially if he publishes them? Anyway, the word isn't meaningless; it's unsatisfactory, but it does stand for something. When I write, I am constantly aware of choices, even in the simplest matters. If I want to convey a character's unexpressed emotions, shall I do it by making

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him perform a significant action, or make a significant remark, or simply by telling the reader what the character felt? Suppose I try it one way and it doesn't come off, so I resort to another—am I experimenting, or not? And if I hit on a way no one has tried before, doesn't that put me in the vanguard, and can I help it if it does? And with all this I still may not have written a book you and your cronies would call original. So, when it appears, you'll ignore my experiments unless I'm a genius, in which case you'll say I wouldn't need to experiment anyway. That's what your "joyous recognition" boils down to: lack of recognition. How will I get recognized in time to be Recognized, if this is the kind of thing you people do to my potential audience?

B: Oh, you'll find an audience if you die in the attempt; and in case you have other plans, take heart. Critics aren't as influential as all that. No critic can break an audience; there's only one in this country who can make the kind of audience you would want; and when he goes, the public will probably be on its own again, bless its little heart, with nothing to fear but the book clubs.

S: Then does it matter how we label ourselves, or are labeled by others?

B: Yes, because labels stick. Critics and book clubs aren't the only cicerones of literature. There are also editors, publishers, booksellers; and if they get into the same incurable habits of classifying writers, that leaves you completely surrounded, doesn't it? And poor old literature looks just as queer at one end as at the other. Vanity of vanguards, saith the Preacher. . . .

S: Preacher is right. You should take orders as a Brooks brother. Where would your Pounds and Williamses be without the vanguard—the little magazines, the eccentrics, the financiers of oddity?

B: Elsewhere, no doubt. I know, I know: there's no one else. And "avant-garde," in our time and place, does have a kind of historical or pragmatic significance: in the situation created by Hollywood and the wreck of humanistic education, it becomes "avant-garde" to be simply honest and creative. But I am beginning to suspect that the avant-garde myth, as fostered by the apparatus of vanguardism, is inappropriate to the present literary situation in America, and dangerous to any future one. Inappropriate, because the term "advance party" assumes the presence not only of an enemy, but of a main body and rear guard on your own side: groups of important, serious writers who are generally read, established, accepted. Is this the case *chez nous?* Take Mr. Laughlin's middle-roaders. Do they constitute a main body? I know they should, but do they? Is Wallace Stevens' audience so very

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much larger than Cummings'? Is Katherine Anne Porter so very much more firmly established than Paul Goodman?

S: I suppose not, but who's to blame for that? Surely not the advance party?

B: No, the enemy, of course: the commercial publishers, the big magazines, the book clubs. But that situation is extraneous to authorship; and the effect of harping on it, the way the vanguardists do, is to internalize it—to put a chip on the shoulder that guides the pen. That's what makes vanguardism dangerous as well as inappropriate. A man sits down to write and says to himself: "If this is good, only the little magazines will publish it; therefore I will only write for the little magazines." And what does he write? As often as not, self-conscious pluckings at the reader's nerve ends. "Heart and soul go bare, go bare," if I may misquote a folk song.

S: You people are certainly obsessed by greatness. You want everything you read to be a spiritual earthquake.

B: Well, I did expect to be a bit more shaken by ten years' choice work of forty bold writers, all brandishing spears and uttering war cries, than I was by *Spearhead*. People will always be hungry for greatness, unless we stop bringing them up on Shakespeare, and maybe even if we do. And why should the positive answers to that need come chiefly from the non-modernists, with their Great Books programs and such diversions? Do not we, the advanced, the speculative, merely complicate the situation, adding a cleavage to the hunger, when we canonize potentially great writers as "different," as "nonconformists"? As though those names had meant anything since the death of taste!

S: When was that, O sage?

B: It came after a long agony, which lasted from about 1937 to Hiroshima. Taste finally went out with confidence. Even in the first post-war period, people were confident that another war would mean the end of civilization; now, having seen that it didn't, they're not so sure that it would matter much if it did. Concurrently with this upset, people were positive, until quite recently, that surrealism was a threat to culture; but now they're uncertain which of the two is preferable.

S: Fascinating. How do you discover these things?

B: Tentacularly. But it's really quite simple: if you don't trust your taste, you haven't any. The "ghastly good taste" of our fathers, when still rampant, was a positive stimulus to creation. Gide revolted against Maurice Barrès, and there was a vanguard. Pound revolted against the Georgians, and there was a vanguard. Why? Partly because Barrès and the Georgians stood for something: they had standards, and

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trusted them. Nowadays people trust neither their fathers' taste nor their own: they're "confused," as they call other people. Therefore they have no taste at all. And how can one revolt against a vacuum, or nonconform with a blank?

S: But there's still bad taste, isn't there? A man can always revolt from Hollywood.

B: True. But would that be original?

S: All right, staying out of Hollywood isn't a new direction either. Then what is?

B: Taking advantage of that very absence of taste, which has created a fluid situation. Writing as if the public's very uncertainty indicated that it has more intelligence than it realizes. Being original without seeming to be: applying the spearhead subcutaneously, as it were. Writing a "conventional" novel, maybe, that the man in the street could read as a good yarn, and that the more perceptive would see as a revolutionary document, subtly presaging an era of truth rather than frankness, fraternity rather than friendliness. . . .

S: What grotesque optimism. The public, my foot! Do Williams and Cummings appear regularly in *The Saturday Evening Post?* How often do you hear Bartok on the Sunday Evening Hour? Was *Time* pleased when Gide got the Nobel Prize?

B: No, but would you like that kind of thing to happen?

S: Well. . . .

B: Spoken like a man! And can we of 1948 get it to happen by packaging our products as novelties and notions? Think what might result if we eliminated the words "modern" and "experimental" from the critic's vocabulary! What vistas arise before me! Literature liberated from literary history! Elegant obscurity and modish irony siphoned out of poetry into the *feuilletons* of the literary dailies! Poets projecting visions, serious and unashamed, as in the eighteen-thirties! Oh, I can sniff the salt air of it—the new joy, the new fervor, the new aspiration!

S: Romanticism, yet. Before you begin to levitate, will you please explain, once and for all, why you prefer those four writers to the other thirty-six? I am hungry for your definition of greatness.

B: Damn it, that makes two reveries you've smashed this morning. And I thought I'd explained that already. Williams, Stein, Cummings, Pound were original to begin with, and they had the added incentive of something formidable to rebel against: the overstuffed ethos that produced Kipling and the First World War. Nowadays, a writer who wants to rival their achievement might do well to begin by rebelling against rebellion as well as conformism, fear as well as confi-

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dence, confusion as well as certitude—and by being himself and more than himself . . . others . . . the others he cares about. . . . Anyway, why shouldn't he be romantic? Surely that direction has potentialities still unpolluted by the movies. And think how new it would be!

S: Yes, indecently so. Well, I must leave you to your agitations. I have some experimenting to do. Let me have my chapter back, please.

B: Why? Have I discouraged you?

S: No; I'm afraid you'll find too few influences in it. Besides, I want to think for a while before doing any more writing.

B: Grand! Do you plan to read between thoughts? You're welcome to borrow . . . let's see . . . Eliot, *Tradition and the Individual Talent*—Gide, *De l'influence en littérature*—Collingwood, *Principles of Art*—Connolly, *The Condemned Playground*—

S: No, thank you. I plan to think for myself. Good morning. (*Exit*).

B (*solus*): Still a nonconformist! Well, art will be art. (*Sighs*) . . . Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this . . . transition?

Frank Jones

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THEATER CHRONICLE

OH, SWEET MYSTERY OF LIFE

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE. By Tennessee Williams. Barrymore Theater.

You are an ordinary guy and your wife's sister comes to stay with you. Whenever you want to go to the toilet, there she is in the bathroom, primping or having a bath or giving herself a shampoo and taking her time about it. You go and hammer on the door ("For Christ's sake, aren't you through yet?"), and your wife shushes you frowningly: Blanche is very sensitive and you must be careful of her feelings. You get sore at your wife; your kidneys are sensitive too. My God, you yell, loud enough so that Blanche can hear you, can't a man pee in his own house, when is she getting out of here? You are pretty sick too of feeling her criticize your table-manners, and does she have to turn on the radio when you have a poker game going, who does she think she is? Finally you and your wife have a fight (you knew all along that She was turning the little woman against you), you decide to put your foot down, Blanche will have to go. Your wife reluctantly gives in—anything for peace, don't think it's been a treat for *her* ("But let me handle it, Joe; after all, she's my own *sister!*"). One way or another (God knows what your wife told her) Blanche gets the idea. You buy her a ticket home. But then right at the end, when you're carrying her bags downstairs for her, you feel sort of funny; maybe you were too hard; but that's the way the world is, and, Boy, isn't it great to be alone?

This variation on the mother-in-law theme is the one solid piece of theatrical furniture that *A Streetcar Named Desire* can show; the rest is antimacassars. Acrimony and umbrage, tears, door-slamming, broken dishes, jeers, cold silences, whispers, raised eyebrows, the determination to take no notice, the whole classic paraphernalia of insult and injury is Tennessee Williams' dowry. That this kind of genre-writing is generally associated with the comic strip and the radio sketch should not invalidate it for him as subject-matter; it has nobler antecedents. The cook, one may recall, is leaving on the opening page of *Anna Karenina,* and Hamlet at the court of Denmark is really play-

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ing the part of the wife's unwelcome relation. The literature of domestic realism is a literature of horrors and apparitions—Dickens, Dostoevsky, Farrell, even Ozzie and Harriet, rattle the skeleton of family life; there is no limit, apparently, to what people will do to each other in the family; nothing is too grotesque or shameful; all laws are suspended, including the law of probability. Mr. Williams, at his best, is an *outrageous* writer in this sense; at his worst, he is outrageous in the other.

Had he been content in *A Streetcar Named Desire* with the terrible trivia of the in-law story, he might have produced a wonderful little comic epic, The Struggle for the Bathroom, an epic ribald and poignant, a *comédie larmoyante* which would not have been deficient either in those larger implications to which his talent presumes, for the bathroom might have figured as the last fortress of the individual, the poor man's club, the working girl's temple of beauty; and the bathtub and the toilet, symbol of illusion and symbol of fact, the prone and the upright, the female and the male, might have faced each other eternally in blank, porcelain contradiction as the area for self-expression contracted to the limits of this windowless cell. Mr. Williams, however, like the Southern women he writes about, appears to have been mortified by the literary poverty of such material, by the pettiness of the arena which is in fact its grandeur. Like Blanche Du Bois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and the mother in *The Glass Menagerie*, he is addicted to the embroidering lie, and though his taste in fancywork differs from these ladies', inclining more to the modernistic, the stark contrast, the jagged scene, the jungle motifs ("Then they come together with low, animal moans"), the tourist Mexican (*"Flores para los muertos, corones para los muertos*), to clarinet music, suicide, homosexuality, rape, and insanity, his work creates in the end that very effect of painful falsity which is imparted to the Kowalski household by Blanche's pink lampshades and couch-covers.

To illustrate with a single instance, take the character of Blanche. In her Mr. Williams has caught a flickering glimpse of the faded essence of the sister-in-law; thin, vapid, neurasthenic, romancing, genteel, pathetic, a collector of cheap finery and of the words of old popular songs, fearful and fluttery and awkward, fond of admiration and overeager to obtain it, a refined pushover and perennial and frigid spinster, this is the woman who inevitably comes to stay and who evokes pity because of her very emptiness, because nothing can ever happen to her since her life is a shoddy magazine story she tells herself in a daydream. But the thin, sleazy stuff of this character must be embellished by Mr. Williams with all sorts of arty decorations. It is not enough that she should

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be a drunkard (this in itself is plausible); she must also be a notorious libertine who has been run out of a small town like a prostitute, a thing absolutely inconceivable for a woman to whom conventionality is the end of existence; she must have an "interesting" biography, a homosexual husband who has shot himself shortly after their marriage, a story so patently untrue that the audience thinks the character must have invented it; and finally she must be a symbol of art and beauty, this poor flimsy creature to whom truth is mortal, who hates the feel of experience with a pathologic aversion—she must not only be a symbol but she must be given a poetic moment of self-definition; she who has never spoken an honest word in her life is allowed, indeed encouraged, to present her life to the audience as a vocational decision, an artist's election of the beautiful, an act of supreme courage, the choice of the thorny way.

In the same manner, Joe Kowalski, the husband, who has been all too enthusiastically characterized as the man who wants to pee, the realist of the bladder and the genitals, the monosyllabic cynic, is made to apostrophize sexual intercourse in a kind of Odetsian or tin-pan alley poetry. Dr. Kinsey would be interested in a semi-skilled male who spoke of the four-letter act as "getting those colored lights going."

If art, as Mr. Williams appears to believe, is a lie, then anything goes, but Mr. Williams' lies, like Blanche's, are so old and shopworn that the very truth upon which he rests them becomes garish and ugly, just as the Kowalskis' apartment becomes the more squalid for Blanche's attempts at decoration. His work reeks of literary ambition as the apartment reeks of cheap perfume; it is impossible to witness one of Mr. Williams' plays without being aware of the pervading smell of careerism. Over and above their subject-matter, the plays seem to emanate an ever-growing confidence in their author's success. It is this perhaps which is responsible for Mr. Williams' box-office draw: there is a curious elation in this work which its subject-matter could not engender. Whatever happens to the characters, Mr. Williams will come out rich and famous, and the play is merely an episode in Mr. Williams' career. And this career in itself has the tinny quality of a musical romance, from movie usher to Broadway lights, like *Alexander's Ragtime Band* or *The Jolson Story*. Pacing up and down a Murray Hill apartment, he tells of his early struggles to a sympathetic reporter. He remembers his "first break." He writes his life-story for a Sunday supplement. He takes his work seriously; he does not want success to spoil him; he recognizes the dangers; he would be glad to have advice. His definition of his literary approach is a triumph of boyish simplicity: "I have always

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had a deep feeling for the mystery in life." This "Hello Mom" note in Mr. Williams' personality is the real, indigenous thing. He is the Aldrich Family and Andy Hardy and possibly Gene Tunney and bride's biscuits and the mother-in-law joke. The cant of the intelligentsia (the jargon, that is, of failure) comes from his lips like an ill-learned recitation: he became, so he says, "that most common American phenomenon, the rootless, wandering writer"—is this a wholly fitting description of a talent which is as rooted in the American pay-dirt as a stout and tenacious carrot?

Mary McCarthy

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MUSIC CHRONICLE

TWO COMPOSERS: A LETTER FROM HOLLYWOOD

Arnold Schönberg and Igor Stravinsky, the two most important composers of today, after wandering for years, have settled down in Hollywood, which is about as far as a European can "go West." It is strange that two men so different in every respect should have chosen this place to live and work in. For even though they are both living in a city which is dominated by the motion picture industry, neither one has anything to do with motion pictures.

Do they feel at home? Are there deeper reasons for their presence? Has their importance diminished since coming to live here?

To answer these questions we must first understand the specific roles which Schönberg and Stravinsky play in our contemporary musical world.

It is probably quite safe to say that the musical activity of the last forty years has evolved essentially under Schönberg's influence. In fact, I doubt if there is a single composer whose work has not been affected by him. And this is true regardless of the composer's age, nationality, musical background, or whether he likes or dislikes Schönberg's compositions. Or *even if he has never actually heard a note of them,* there isn't one composer who could write the same music had Schönberg's not existed. Though his work is the most traditional of all contemporary music, Schönberg's fantastic innovations have entirely transformed the art of sound through what might be called the emancipation of dissonance.

However, the history of music—and history in general for that matter—never evolves in a straight line, and it would certainly be a mistake to think that the Schönbergian influence is the only one there is. His genuine antithesis exists, in fact, in the person of Igor Stravinsky.

In background, origins, and tradition Schönberg and Stravinsky are poles apart. Schönberg, the Viennese, inherited the riches of a century-long evolution which from Bach, through Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann on to Brahms, Wagner, and Mahler was based on

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polyphonic thinking, on functional harmony, on variation. Stravinsky, the Russian, was brought up in the atmosphere of the well-known "Five" (Balakirev, Cui, Borodin, Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov) who, through Glinka, had inherited some Italian influences, and who, basing their art on folkloristic elements, had endeavored to create an autonomous Russian music—liberated from what is, to a man like Schönberg, its real heart. Yet the difference thus established between Schönberg and Stravinsky is only peripheral. Schönberg has not accepted his tradition passively but has augmented it in a very specific way. Nor is Stravinsky a slave to the "local" tradition in which he was born—and, in any case, it may be said that with Rimsky-Korsakov already, the endeavor of the Five had proved a failure: in his works we find infiltrations of those "Germanic" elements which the Russians had originally set out to fight. It did not take long for Stravinsky's path to cross the modern road of Western tradition. He soon became aware of Schönberg's emancipation of dissonance, and so accepted it, in his own way, that now there are people who believe that the *Sacre du Printemps,* in 1913, created the caezura in modern harmony, forgetting or not knowing that, already in 1906, Schönberg had drawn more radical conclusions.

The emancipation of dissonance, however, is only one aspect of Schönberg's music, and there are more important differences between Schönberg and Stravinsky. Schönberg accepted the consequences of a tradition, developing it with lucidity and strength. But this cannot be said for Stravinsky. His approach to the same problems, bold as it may have sounded thirty-five years ago, today seems timorous and superficial. Originally attracted by new sounds and rhythmic devices, he failed to see really what they implied. His harmonic innovations (unlike Schönberg's which are derived from a logical use of the twelve tones) are based on little more than notions—like his superimpositions of triads. As chords they often have a genuine musical significance, but their meaning stays "local." They cannot be used in another work without becoming a mere *imitation* of themselves. Lucky as their discovery was, they have been unable to evolve; by now they are pure automatons, and their automatic use has exhausted the patience even of their creator.

The sacrifice of arbitrary and hedonistic attitudes which Schönberg demands is difficult for most musicians. Hence, many of them who want to be "modern" or "advanced" find it easier to follow Stravinsky. Wasn't he one of those who shook the tyranny of convention? Wasn't the first performance of the *Sacre du Printemps* one of the biggest "scandals" in musical history? But from the very beginning Stravinsky's work has been outside the great tradition. Even in his boldest works, the segments,

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themes, sections are simply juxtaposed rather than organically developed. Although I doubt if anything really valuable can be achieved this way, one must admit that Stravinsky's skill and lucidity (as far as what he wants is concerned), constitute an assault against musical composition as such, a radical questioning of traditional means. But this is not what his disciples see. Unable to master the devices which musical schools are no longer able to teach anyway (but on which Schönberg insists with fanatic fidelity and faith), they look up to Stravinsky for his evasions rather than his achievements. Nevertheless, for more than twenty years the musical world has been divided over the two contemporaries. From California, they still send their message over the world, enchanting and stimulating their followers, irritating and provoking their adversaries.

Stravinsky and Schönberg both live completely shut off from "official" Hollywood life. Schönberg's house is far out, in Brentwood Park, about twenty miles from the center of town. Stravinsky's house, though nearer the center, is tucked away on a little hillside. Both men see few people, not because they are antisocial, but because few people here care to see them.

A great part of Schönberg's life has been devoted to teaching. He always has been, and still is, a real *master*. Here on the Coast he taught for many years at the University of California in Los Angeles. The age limit being sixty-five, an exception was made for him, and he stayed on until he had to retire at seventy. He still takes private pupils. Some of them come from far away: one of the first persons I met at his house was a young musician from New Zealand. On Sundays there is a class of about fifteen students. Significantly, it is attended even by some of Schönberg's former University pupils, who are now accomplished musicians and teachers themselves.

Schönberg never teaches a style at all. His only object is to train the musical faculties of his pupils. He has never tried to induce anyone to write as he does. Up till recently he did not even bother to examine, from a didactic point of view, works which adopted his method of composition with twelve tones, because he thought that when someone had reached this stage, he had already become (whether good or bad) a mature composer. He thinks of himself as the heir of principles which it is his duty to transmit.

Stravinsky's case is different. He has never actually taught. This should not seem surprising when we consider his general musical attitude. What is there for him to teach? His own "tricks"? When asked about having pupils, Stravinsky's answer is a simple one: Everything I

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should like other musicians to do is being taught by Nadia Boulanger. He is right. For many years this strange woman has been the high priest of the Stravinsky cult. She has turned out numerous composers—French, Russian, English, American—to whom she has illuminated the works of a few great masters of the past in the light of Stravinsky's neo-classicist outlook, and has thus set up Stravinsky's music itself as an ideal of a refined and elegant style. Invariably these composers, wherever they come from, write the same "Stravinskyish" scores, light, superficial, interchangeable, their lack of genuine musical thought being equaled only by the boredom which they promote. They are the only young musicians who receive Stravinsky's praise.

Both composers make a living from works which they are commissioned to write, but their ways of composing differ in every respect. Stravinsky writes slowly, meticulously, every day at regular hours, with the cold determination and control of an engineer. His musical handwriting alone is amazing in its precision and clarity and a page from his scores resembles the blueprint of an architect. His works continue, one after the other, the destructive process he began in 1912, and which has become more and more open. These works are brilliantly made as far as craftsmanship goes, and every note seems to be the result of absolute lucidity. But behind these frozen and sometimes readymade patterns (or rather, these petrified sound forms, put together with such diabolical skill) there is nothing except perhaps the illusion of music. In Stravinsky's hands the musical materials are like stone, wood, or leather. The complete work is, in the long run, a grouping of diverse elements which *sounds* because it is made of sounds but which only conveys the deadly *Maya* of a musical work. Usually Stravinsky's latest pieces are very tame in structure and expression, but once in a while—as in the first movement of the recent *Third Symphony*—some of the violence of the older works comes back, creating the impression of utter hatred, even revolt, against every item of musical organization.

Talking with Stravinsky about his work, one notices that nothing new has preoccupied him of late. To him, composing music means to gain a victory over some precise difficulty, to solve a problem and nothing else. Perhaps the key to the only evolution Stravinsky has ever undergone can be found in this paradox: an ever increasing mastery and control applied to less and less significant musical problems.

How different again it is with Schönberg. His work is sporadically full of renewal, dominated by passion, boldness, and risk. Like a gambler who puts everything he owns on one last, final, perhaps fatal, stake, Schönberg composes every work with his entire being. This is true in

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many ways, not only figuratively. A little over a year ago Schönberg was very sick, so sick that he actually *died* for a few hours and could only be brought back to life by means of a series of injections in the heart. Before that his eyes had already troubled him, and, since his illness, his sight has become so weak that he has to have special, extra-large manuscript paper made for him, with the lines of the staves about half an inch apart. What is more, he can read or write for only ten to fifteen minutes at a time. The result has been that he has begun to write at a speed which perhaps only Mozart ever achieved before.

Though his latest works are as perfectly organized, as carefully planned as his older ones, they show entirely new preoccupations. What distinguishes the *String Trio* (written in 1946) or the recently finished *Survivor of Warsaw* for reciter, male chorus, and orchestra, from earlier scores is the use of extensive, manifold contrasting elements. It is an incredible sight to watch a composer who for fifty years has been the exponent of musical economy, now unfold an amazing abundance of ideas without ever falling into chaos and disorder. Every new work has an absolute novelty of its own. The wild and utterly fresh features of the *Survivor of Warsaw* (this complex score was composed in a week), demonstrate a vitality and creative strength which are almost inconceivable: it is frankly a masterpiece.

About two years ago a well-known "commercial" musician, Nat Shilkret, undertook a curious, and perhaps typically "Hollywoodian" enterprise. He commissioned all the best-known composers living here to write an orchestral piece illustrating a chapter from Genesis—Schönberg, Stravinsky, Milhaud, Toch, Tansman, Castelnuovo-Tedesco (and he also wrote one himself). It is interesting to notice that Stravinsky chose the Tower of Babel, and Schönberg the Prelude before the Creation. Stravinsky's piece is based on a good many of the rhythmic devices which we know from the *Sacre du Printemps* (where they were applied to much more daring harmonies) and the *Symphony of Psalms*; Schönberg's starts out with a grandiose vision of chaos, with a contrabass tuba bringing in the main motive in the deepest possible register, and proceeds to a middle part (built as an eight-part canon) which is probably not only one of his greatest contrapuntal achievements, but which may well become one of the greatest examples of polyphonic writing. All seven pieces were recorded and sold in one big album. Not one of the other participants betrays the slightest ability to write a coherent piece of music.

René Leibowitz

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ART CHRONICLE

THE DECLINE OF CUBISM

As more and more of the recent work of the masters of the School of Paris reaches this country after the six years' interruption between 1939 and 1945, any remaining doubt vanishes as to the continuing fact of the decline of art that set in in Paris in the early thirties. Picasso, Braque, Arp, Miró, Giacometti, Schwitters—exhibitions, samples, and reproductions would indicate exhaustion on the part of those who in the first three decades of the century created what is now known as modern art. This impression is supported by the repetitious or retrograde tendencies of the work of the notable School of Paris artists who spent the war years here: Léger, Chagall, Lipchitz. And there is also the weakening Mondrian's art suffered between 1937 and his death in 1944 (in this country). On the other hand, Matisse, the late Bonnard, and even the late Vuillard seem to have been spared by the general debility, going on in the thirties and forties to deliver themselves of some of their supreme statements: in the usual way of painters, who, unlike most poets, get better as they grow older.

The problem for criticism is to explain why the Cubist generation and its immediate successors have, contrary to artists' precedent, fallen off in middle and old age, and why belated Impressionists like Bonnard and Vuillard could maintain a higher consistency of performance during the last fifteen years; why even the German Expressionist, Max Beckmann, so inferior to Picasso in native gifts, should paint better today than he does. And why, finally, Matisse, with his magnificent but transitional style, which does not compare with Cubism for historical importance, is able to rest so securely in his position as the greatest master of the twentieth century, a position Picasso is further than ever from threatening.

At first glance we realize that we are faced with the debacle of the age of "experiment," of the Apollinairian and Cubist mission and its hope, coincident with that of Marxism and the whole matured tradition of Enlightenment, of humanizing the world. In the plastic arts Cubism, and nothing else, is the age of "experiment." Whatever feats

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Fauvism in the hands of Matisse, and late Impressionism in those of Bonnard and Vuillard, have been capable of, Cubism remains the great phenomenon, the epoch-making feat of twentieth-century art, a style that has changed and determined the complexion of Western art as radically as Renaissance naturalism once did. And the main factor in the recent decline of art in Europe is the disorientation of Cubist style, which is involved in a crisis that—by a seeming quirk—spares the surviving members of the generation of artists preceding it in point of historical development.

Yet it does not matter who is exempted from this crisis, so long as Cubism is not. For Cubism is still the only vital style of our time, the one best able to convey contemporary feeling, and the only one capable of supporting a tradition which will survive into the future and form new artists. The surviving masters of Impressionism, Fauvism, and Expressionism can still deliver splendid performances, and they can influence young artists fruitfully—but they cannot *form* them. Cubism is now the only school. But why, then, if Cubism is the only style adequate to contemporary feeling, should it have shown itself, in the persons of its masters, less able to withstand the tests of the last twenty years? The answer is subtle but not far-fetched.

The great art style of any period is that which relates itself to the true insights of its time. But an age may repudiate its real insights, retreat to the insights of the past—which, though not its own, seem safer to act upon—and accept only an art that corresponds to this repudiation; in which case the age will go without great art, to which truth of feeling is essential. In a time of disasters the less radical artists, like the less radical politicians, will perform better since, being familiar with the expected consequences of what they do, they need less nerve to keep to their course. But the more radical artists, like the more radical politicians, become demoralized because they need so much more nerve than the conservatives in order to keep to a course that, guided by the real insights of the age, leads into unknown territory. Yet if the radical artist's loss of nerve becomes permanent, then art declines as a whole, for the conservative artist rides only on momentum and eventually loses touch with the insights of his time—by which all genuine artists are nourished. Or else society may refuse to have any new insights, refuse to make new responses—but in that case it would be better not to talk about art at all. . . .

Cubism originated not only from the art that preceded it, but also from a complex of attitudes that embodied the optimism, boldness, and self-confidence of the highest stage of industrial capitalism, of a period

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in which the scientific outlook had at last won a confirmation that only some literary men quarreled with seriously, and in which society seemed to have demonstrated its complete capacity to solve its most serious internal as well as environmental problems. Cubism, by its rejection of illusionist effects in painting or sculpture and its insistence on the physical nature of the two-dimensional picture plane—which it made prominent again in a way quite different from that in which Oriental, medieval, or barbaric art did—expressed the positivist or empirical state of mind with its refusal to refer to anything outside the concrete experience of the particular discipline, field, or medium in which one worked; and it also expressed the empiricist's faith in the supreme reality of concrete experience. Along with this—regardless of whether the individual Cubist happened to believe in God, David Hume, or Hermes Trismegistus, for it was a question of a state of mind, not of a reasoned, consistent philosophical position—went an all-pervasive conviction that the world would inevitably go on improving, so that no matter what chances one took with the new, the unknown, or the unforeseeable, there was no risk of getting anything inferior or more dangerous than what one already had.

Cubism reached its height during the First World War and, though the optimism on which it unconsciously floated was draining away fast, during the twenties it was still capable, not only of masterpieces from the hands of Picasso, Braque, Léger, but also of sending forth such bold innovators as Arp, Mondrian, and Giacometti, not to mention Miró. But in the early thirties, by which time both Picasso's and Braque's art had entered upon a crisis from which neither artist has since shown any signs of recovering, the social, emotional, and intellectual substructure of Cubism began crumbling fast. Even Klee fell off after 1930. Surrealism and Neo-Romanticism, with their rejuvenated academicism, sprang up to compete for attention, and Bonnard, painting better and better within a discipline and frame of mind established as long ago as 1905 and for that reason, apparently, more impervious to the prevalent malaise, began to be talked about as the greatest French painter of his time, notwithstanding the presence of Matisse to whom Bonnard himself owed so much.

After 1939 the Cubist heritage entered what would seem the final stage of its decline in Europe. True, Dubuffet, a Cubist at heart, has appeared since then, and the best of the younger generation of French artists—Tal Coat, Kermadec, Manessier, Le Moal, Pignon, Tailleux, etc., etc.—work within Cubism; but so far they have added nothing but refinements. None of them, except Dubuffet, is truly original. It is no

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wonder that the death of abstract art, which, even in its Kandinsky and Klee variants, is still essentially Cubist, has been announced so often during the last ten years. In a world filled with nostalgia and too profoundly frightened by what has just happened to dare hope that the future contains anything better than the past, how can art be expected to hold on to advanced positions? The masters of Cubism, formed by the insights of a more progressive age, had advanced too far, and when history began going backwards they had to retreat, in confusion, from positions that were more exposed because they were more advanced. The metaphor, I feel, is exact. . . .

Obviously, the present situation of art contains many paradoxes and contradictions that only time will resolve. Prominent among them is the situation of art in this country. If artists as great as Picasso, Braque, and Léger have declined so grievously, it can only be because the general social premises that used to guarantee their functioning have disappeared in Europe. And when one sees, on the other hand, how much the level of American art has risen in the last five years, with the emergence of new talents so full of energy and content as Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, David Smith—and also when one realizes how consistently John Marin has maintained a high standard, whatever the narrowness of his art—then the conclusion forces itself, much to our own surprise, that the main premises of Western art have at last migrated to the United States, along with the center of gravity of industrial production and political power.

Not all the premises have reached this shore—not by a long shot; but enough of them are here and enough of them have abandoned Paris to permit us to abandon our chronic, and hitherto justified, pessimism about the prospects of American art, and hope for much more than we dared hope for in the past. It is not beyond possibility that the Cubist tradition may enjoy a new efflorescence in this country. . . . Meanwhile the fact remains that it is in decline at the moment.

Clement Greenberg

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THE STATURE OF

Thomas Mann

Edited by Charles Neider

ESSAYS ON MANY ASPECTS OF MANN'S LIFE AND WORK INCLUDING *Wanderlied,* G. A. Borgese; *Strictly Personal,* Charles Jackson; *To Thomas Mann,* Dorothy Thompson; *Children and Fools,* Conrad Aiken; *Europe Beware,* André Gide; *Mann in Exile,* Lion Feuchtwanger; *The Artists as Bourgeois,* Charles Neider; *Mann and the Religious Revival,* P. B. Rice; *What We Hope from Thomas Mann,* Albert Guerard; *The Idea, the Word, and the Deed,* H. T. Lowe-Porter. Bruno Frank, Ludwig Lewisohn, and Vernon Venable on "Death in Venice." Lewis Mumford, J. W. Beach, and H. J. Weigand on "The Magic Mountain." Menno ter Braak and Stefan Zweig on "The Beloved Returns." Julius Bab, Harry Levin, and Thomas Mann on the Joseph novels. Comparative studies by Lienhard Bergel, Berthold Biermann, Kenneth Burke, and Helen Muchnic. Recollections by Erika, Klaus, Monika, and Heinrich Mann. Other contributors are: W. H. Auden, R. M. Lovett, Gabriela Mistral, Reinhold Niebuhr, J. B. Priestley, Bruno Walter, and twenty-six others.

NEW DIRECTIONS, 500 FIFTH AVE., NEW YORK CITY—$5

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BOOKS

THOUSANDS OF WORDS—ALL GOOD ONES

THE AMERICAN COLLEGE DICTIONARY. Edited by Clarence L. Barnhart. Random House. $5.00.

In the vasty shadow of Webster's New International, completed in its latest form in 1934, there seems to be room for plenty of other dictionaries, and during the past year three or four new ones of some pretensions have been published in this great Republic. Of these, the one here under review is certainly not the meanest. It was put together by professionals of high competence, it shows good judgment and good taste in its arrangement and format, and most of its points of difference from the others are substantial superiorities which give its promoters plausible excuse for the hullabaloo they are making over it.

The hardest problem confronting a dictionary editor is that of selection. Even when he undertakes a so-called unabridged work he soon finds that it is quite impossible to include *all* the words and phrases in the language. Some are nothing more than nonce-forms that may serve their purpose and vanish into limbo before his copy can run the gantlet of his composing-room, e.g., *globalony, bam,* and *third termite.* Some are foreign loans that remain defectively naturalized and under strong competition from native forms, e.g., *ponhoss* (*pfannhase*), and *trocha.* Yet others are compounds and inflections that have support in the genius of the language and yet look somehow unnatural and uncouth, e.g., *unlevel, broadcasted,* and *alright.* More are technical terms, perfectly sound in their proper places, but still lingering outside the fold of the common speech, e.g., *glomb* and *hysterectomy.* Finally, there is the vast vocabulary of transient and often vulgar slang, here today and gone tomorrow, and the smaller and older but even more vexatious repertoire of words permanently below the salt, most of them of four letters.

Barnhart has dealt with all these difficulties shrewdly and effectively. In order to get at the basic materials of the language he has made use of the Thorndike-Lorge word-count—a laborious study which determined the order of frequency of the first 30,000 words in texts running to 25,000,000. This super-colossal *Arbeit* also established some-

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thing else—the extent to which one meaning of a word—if it has more than one—prevails over others. In many cases the number of different meanings is almost incredible. Those of *point,* for example, come to 55 and those of *run* to 109. The older dictionaries commonly list such meanings in the order of their historical appearance in the language, but Barnhart and his brethren, leaning on Thorndike and Lorge, give them in the order of their frequency in current American speech.

This may seem to be a small matter, but it actually makes for quick reference. Under *style,* for example, the inquirer first gets all the definitions which have to do with fashions in clothing, modes of living, and artistic matters before he hears that the word also means a pointed instrument for etching, the gnomon of a sundial, and (to a botanist) "a narrow, usually cylindrical and more or less filiform extension of the ovary, which, when present, bears the stigma at its apex." Barnhart seldom omits the lesser, more esoteric meanings, though his dictionary does not pretend to be unabridged. In many cases, indeed, he gives more meanings than Thorndike and Lorge seem to have encountered in their texts, for he casts a far wider net than they used, and is especially strong in scientific significances, many of them very recent.

In the case of nonce-words he is somewhat more cautious. When they show signs of living for some time he lists them, e.g., *jive* and *wise-crack,* but when they reveal an increasing pallor he rejects them, e.g., *goobledegook* and *globalony.* So with slang. *Sez you, lounge-lizard,* and *oh yeah* are *non est,* but *jam-session* and *to jaywalk* are both there, and *sheik* is given in the apparently durable sense of "a masterful man of irresistible romantic charm." *Charley-horse* is listed without apology, though those learned in physic have a different name for it, and the new medical terms are heavily represented, so that you will have to look no further for *streptomycin, geriatrics, psychosomatic,* and *benadryl.* There is even some yielding to the reformed spelling with which the resurrection men now entertain themselves, and you will find it in *sulfadiazine.* But *chlorine,* happily, is still *chlorine,* not *chlorin.*

Barnhart gets rid of the difficulty presented by the ancient dirty words by simply omitting them *en bloc*—perhaps a better plan, all things considered, than the lame compromises attempted by other dictionary editors. He even throws out the very mild one to be found in II Kings 18:27, Isa. 36:12, and I Sam. 25:22, and the common Anglo-American term for the gluteal cushion appears neither as *arse* nor as *ass.* However, when he comes to *backside* and *behind* he prints *backside* and omits *behind,* though both were denounced as equally obscene by the Post Office wowsers in the *Esquire* case. Here, I suppose, one may surmise that most

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such nursery terms are so well known on American campuses that putting everyone of them into a *college* dictionary would be supererogatory. The same, perhaps, may be said of the older and racier four-letter words, all of which are familiar, if not to the faculty, then at least to the students, many of whom have had military training. But why, then, admit *snafu,* the penultimate element of which is as indecorous as anything in literature, whether sacred or profane? And why pass over *to goose,* a truly magnificent American verb, and of particular interest because its etymology is still a mystery?

Barnhart's technical advisers—for example, W. Cabell Greet, Kemp Malone, Miles L. Hanley, Charles G. Fries, and Allen Walker Read—are all professors, but they are also men of common sense, and as a result there is a laudable absence of academic piffle in his dictionary. There is no attempt to establish rigid standards of pronunciation. What is good enough for any literate speaker is good enough for these strangely unorthodox pedagogues. The contrary view, says Fries, who is the foremost living American grammarian, "belongs to a pre-scientific period that still believes the earth to be flat and denies the circulation of the blood." What English-speaking people actually say is the English language: the dictionary can only follow. If the speaker is English, or Bostonese, or of the Hudson Valley pseudo-aristocracy he gives *aunt, grass, path* the broad *a* of *art* and if he is 100% American he gives them the *a* of *act,* but it is all one. Both are right, just as both are right when the Englishman says *lift* and the American says *elevator.*

The same thing may be said of speech levels within one country or the other. "That English is good English," says Harrison Platt, Jr., one of the new dictionary's assistant editors, "which communicates well the thought of a given speaker to a given audience." The schoolma'm, bedeviled by necromancers out of Teachers College, Columbia, still teaches her laboratory animals that "It it *me*" is "incorrect," but all American philologians above the rank of floggers of freshmen have long since agreed that this is nonsense. In the new dictionary the *and* in "try *and* do it" is not denounced as evil and against God, but simply marked "colloquial." But sometimes, alas, the feet of the learned editors slip, as when they describe *ain't* as "now illiterate or dialectical." It is, of course, nothing of the sort. On the contrary, it is perfectly sound everyday idiom, and may one day be quite as respectable as *isn't.* Even the double negative, as more than one *avant-garde* philologian has lately admitted, is a good deal less criminal than the schoolma'm alleges. In one way, at least, it usually meets a primary specification for all speech: it is crystal-clear in meaning.

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The new dictionary is very well turned out. The page, of course, is crowded, but there has been no effort to lighten it with typographical novelties—type and make-up are conventional but excellent. The paper is good and the binding is sturdy. Save for a list of symbols at the end, and another of given-names, the 132,000 entries are in one long alphabet, including all other proper names, all abbreviations, and all unnaturalized loans from non-English languages, e.g., *sforzando* and *au fait*. The maps deserve high praise, for they are both numerous and illuminating. Under *Jericho,* for example, there is a little outline plan of Palestine and its neighbors which shows precisely where the town lies, and under *Erie Canal* there is one showing the route of the canal from Buffalo to Albany. The old dictionary device of indicating the size of living creatures by printing 1/6, 1/64, or the like under the pictures of them is abandoned for the more rational scheme of giving their heights and lengths in feet and inches. This last is not original, but it is a great help to the reader.

I recommend this new dictionary to the nobility and gentry. It is comprehensive, it is scientific, it is handy and sightly—and it is astonishingly cheap. It has, to be sure, some defects. The grotesque musical terms in use in England, e.g., *crochet, minim,* and *hemidemisemiquaver,* are properly listed and defined, but why are they used in definitions, as in that of *alla breve?* Also, where is *Bible Belt?* I have a tenderness toward it because I invented it myself, but is that any reason for excluding it? It has come into wide use in the United States and England, and there is no other term that means exactly the same thing. Moreover, it gathers new shades of significance, as good terms always do: *in participeps infidelium* it is used satirically and even mockingly, whereas in the Deep South it is coming to be used proudly.

So caviling, I subside.

H. L. Mencken

MUCH OUTCRY; LITTLE OUTCOME

THAT WINTER, By Merle Miller. Sloane. $3.00.
OTHER VOICES, OTHER ROOMS. By Truman Capote. Random House. $2.75.

We can no longer complain that our peculiar contemporary American institutions are being overlooked by fiction writers. Almost every month brings forth another novel about the radio, the movies, the large magazines and publishing houses. Contemplating these gifts, one

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speculates that what is really wanted is a book about a man who would *not* leave Warner Brothers, NBC, or *Time* and who remained so unalterably "corrupt" he never got around to writing that novel his college friends expected of him. Unfortunately, most of the books about these vast items of popular culture are seen through the eyes of a feeble writer-hero who assumes that the most important thing is to break with it all and go into a small, independent business; that is, fiction writing. The Radio City mountains tremble, great advertising barons are terrified, the public is in a state of shocked anticipation—and out comes a mouse, free and smug, dragging his mousy typewriter behind him.

It is this aspect of Merle Miller's *That Winter* I find most revealing: the hero's revolt from what seems to be *Time* and his rejection of an offer from a periodical similar to *The New Republic,* in favor of the life of a novelist. About the rest of the book, the post-war generation, the veteran's adjustment, the experience of war, Miller has so little gift for social analysis and generalization that one is unable to discover what, except the memory of many of Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's notions, he had in mind about his three soldiers. One of the soldiers commits suicide, another overcomes his pretensions and accepts his family and his name, but it is the third, Peter, who dominates the plot. And the plot is: will Peter give up his job and become a writer?

Recently John Steinbeck explained to the Russians that in America the writer was considered "just below acrobats and just above seals." This seems to me the most whimsical form of self-deception, indeed a rather touching moment of modesty, possibly to be understood as the payment of a man suffering from the guilt of too much attention and fame. The real secret of the writer's position in America is best exposed in a book like Miller's which can assume, without qualification or defense, a clear-cut moral opposition between the vice of non-writing and the virtue of writing. In such novels it is considered apparent that the general verbal talents which enable a man to be a successful copy writer or journalist also present him with a profound, almost religious, dilemma. If he is decent and honorable he will accept the challenge and become a novelist. As a reward for his virtue, the right girl will turn up, his mother will love him, his old school friends will no longer accuse him of moral depravity, and he will find peace within himself. It is the simple morality tale of the libertine who becomes a saint.

And this typically American story is becoming more and more eerie, a sort of play within a play, since the denouement is accomplished by the fact that the reader is holding a book in his hands. In *That Winter* the physical existence of the novel, published and packaged, is the true

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ending of the story, the sweet music of the angels. Another curiosity in the book is that the villain is also a writer. His villainy consists in his being cheap and successful, indicating that it is not prosperity and fame the hero and public find purifying. What is it then? The hero's mind is intensely ordinary; his concern for and interest in literature are only what one might expect from a college boy who has taken courses in the English department. Furthermore, no answer is supplied to the deep psychological question of why the hero, with his unmistakably sincere contempt for the easy and commercial, should have written a book not strikingly better than the sort his wicked novelist might have turned out in his rich decline. In the purest sense the aim of the hero seems to be one of mere function, the condition of public beatitude which the role of writer provides so efficiently. The implication of this, and other stories of its kind, cannot be missed. America, far from scorning the writer, regards him with awe. This feeling of awe gets into the first novels of young Americans without censorship. Later, the writer, overwhelmed by the responsibilities of his sacred office, begins to dream and to mutter about acrobats and seals.

Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* can hardly be said, as has been claimed, to be striking a new note in fiction. On the contrary, its most fascinating contribution is that it rings a tinkling funeral bell for some of our recent Southern fiction. Here at last is the parody whose appearance was inevitable; amidst sherry and gloom, withering homosexuals, and dainty sadistic women, many of the devices that have served young Southern writers well have been literally done to death.

It is understandable that the end should come, not with Faulkner, but with a minor imitation of a very talented minor writer, Carson McCullers. Capote has even expropriated, in fine scalawag fashion, Carson McCullers' most distinctive character: the rowdy, boyish, but sensitive young girl whose speech has an earthy, weird humor; he has also made this girl *his* best character. All of this is done with such swan-song cunning that Carson McCullers, if she continues to write in her old vein, can only appear to be imitating Capote.

Up until this time the charm and capriciousness of Southern fiction, the extravagance of character, the comedy of provincial life, the love of gentility and pretense, had the appealing quality of having been observed firsthand. Now, in Capote's book, these attitudes seem literary and clever. Whimsicality and neurosis are divorced from character and become things in themselves, a kind of technical brilliance. Previously, this gifted, knowing, bargain basement use of fashionable

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clichés has not been as typical of fiction as of the other arts. Capote shows us that in literature, too, you can reach the equivalent of those sophisticated painters who seem miraculously to have been born with precisely the same imagination as Paul Klee. In that sense, *Other Voices, Other Rooms* already has a quaint historical significance.

Elizabeth Hardwick

THE PASSION AND THE TASK

THE NOTEBOOKS OF HENRY JAMES. Edited by F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock. Oxford University Press. $6.00.

By this time anyone who has not actually read these notebooks will have become acquainted with their general content, scope, and importance. All that can now be done is to add one's own support to the widely expressed conviction that there is nothing quite like them in the whole range of our literature. There are in existence plenty of journals, memoirs, and notebooks by eminent artists in all fields—Leonardo, Delacroix, Hawthorne, the Goncourts, and Gide among many others. But for the most part these are made up of impressions, observations on experience, or opinions on large subjects. Dostoevsky, writing in his journal, will tell us of seeing one Sunday afternoon a forlorn-looking workingman taking a stroll with a small child, and of how the sight stirs him to reconstruct the whole background of the man's life. But only Keats in his letters and Hopkins in his notebooks provide the excitement that comes from an account of the "divine process" itself, the eternal romance which the dedicated artist carries on with his muse.

Romance is neither too far-fetched or sentimental a word to describe what James himself called, in a letter to Wells, this "interminable garrulous letter addressed to my own fancy." In this rare and unprecedented colloquy his fancy becomes something personified—even apotheosized, that is to say, *outside* himself. Like Rimbaud, he seems to say, *"JE est un autre"*; and the limited, fallible, tormented creature who is the artist is someone through whom a great unspeakable force is striving to get itself realized. We are, of course, reminded of Plato and the daemonic possession, of the even more ancient and primitive concept of the poet as the vehicle or mouthpiece of superior powers. It is the furthest application of the ideal of aesthetic detachment which James inherited from the Flaubert tradition. But all this is perhaps to em-

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phasize the anguish of estrangement at the expense of the tender and intimate satisfactions which are also part of any grand romantic affair. Writing at Coronado Beach, California, in a moment of discouragement, he invokes "my familiar demon of patience, who always comes, doesn't he?, when I call. He is here with me in front of this green Pacific—he sits close and I feel his soft breath, which cools and steadies and inspires, on my cheek. Everything sinks in: nothing is lost; everything abides and fertilizes and renews its golden promise." This is indeed the very ecstasy of love! And there is his habit of using certain terms of endearment, "Ah, things swim before me, *caro mio,* and I only need to sit tight, to keep my place and fix my eyes, to see them float past me in the current into which I can cast my little net and make my little haul." And the most sustained of these amorous lyrical outbursts: "I come back, I come back, as I say, I all throbbingly and yearningly and passionately, oh, *mon bon,* come back to this way that is clearly the only one in which I can do anything now. . . . " In short, it is this unbroken dramatic tension between art and life, form and experience, which will make these notations for some people as exciting as any of his novels.

In particular there is a passage (p. 320), too long to quote, which bears comparison with the finest in the whole body of his work. Rarely in his notes does James permit himself to go "to smash on the rock of autobiography." But, late in life, returning to the Cambridge of his youth, he pays a visit to the "unspeakable group of graves" in the family cemetery. To present the emotion, the consequent emotion of this "accident"—that is, he tells us, what it is to be a *"master."* First of all, the *mise-en-scène*: "It was late, in November; the trees all bare, the dusk to fall early, the air all still . . . with the western sky more and more turning to that terrible, deadly, pure polar pink that shows behind American woods. . . . It was the moment; it was the hour; it was the blessed flood of emotion that broke out at the touch of one's sudden *vision* and carried me away." Approaching his sister Alice's tomb, with its lines from Dante, he is so overcome by the *rightness* of the whole occasion that he is filled with "an anguish of gratitude." "Everything was there, everything *came*; the recognition, stillness, the strangeness, the pity and the sanctity and the terror, the breath-catching passion and the divine relief of tears." How is this to be *expressed,* why does his pen not drop before "the infinite pity and tragedy of all the past? It does, poor helpless pen, with what it meets of the ineffable . . . of the cold Medusa-face of life, of all the life *lived,* on every side"?

Much might be written about this passage. Tracing as it does the

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whole process from the experience to the emotion, from the emotion to at least its partial recreation and weighed significance, its action is the creative act itself. The prose, in its fitting of syntactical rhythm to blended thought and feeling, is of a kind rarely to be found in English since the seventeenth century. It is prose *doing* the thing about which it is talking. Lastly, it should give the lie forever to those who would still deny that James was unable to scrape the depths.

If nothing has here been said of the practical aspect of the notes, their inestimable *utility* to students or writers of fiction, it is because the editors do such a superb job in this regard. Taken together with James's Prefaces, they constitute the best manual of the art of fiction in existence. Messrs. Murdock and Matthiessen help make this claim possible by their intelligent and tactful arrangement, selection, and commentaries.

William Troy

PROVINCIAL

THE LAST OF THE PROVINCIALS. The American Novel, 1915-1925. By Maxwell Geismar. Houghton Mifflin. $3.50.

Mr. Geismar's prose is so interesting and curious that it's not easy to attend to what he is trying to say with it. It is all dots and dashes and capitalizations, the flashiest parts of old metaphors and new jargons, glamour and confusion, insinuating questions, high-classifications, illogic and ingrammar, a sort of belligerent reverie. "The young literary lions of the Foetal School" (he writes) "—E. E. Cummings, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot among them—were cutting capers around the seniors of the Hypoendocrinal School—the Mores, Matthews, and Van Dykes" and so on, and he calls Fitzgerald "Scott" four times at the bottom of one page, producing an effect absolutely cozy. At the same time he is extremely vague and hesitating: "In one sense . . . almost . . . of some interest" is typical, and "in a way it is a rather curious gain" and "almost come as something of a shock"; "It is interesting" is his favorite phrase, "curious" his favorite word, everything is "interesting" or "curious" to Mr. Geismar.

The present volume consists of five seventy-page studies, with little reference back and forth, and with the most indifferent major transitions I have noticed for years ("As you'll see, though," "In her own

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terms, though," "Meanwhile, though. . . . As you will see"). It is excellent, despite its manner, on Sinclair Lewis, whom he does not call "Sinclair"; enthusiastic but indiscriminate on Sherwood Anderson and F. Scott Fitzgerald; mediocre on Willa Cather, and badly muddled on H. L. Mencken. Geismar's method is to study carefully and chronologically his author's books, especially those neglected by others, try to work out a consistent pattern in relation to what he takes (sometimes acutely) the author's original drives to have been, and upset popular notions about the author with his results. He has little interest in craft or in artistic questions generally, and is always willing to overpraise inferior books for thematic purposes. With Lewis the method works admirably, and Geismar can be seen at his best here. But he is inclined to beat his authors with "reality," to overrate wildly the determinant influence of societal situations, and to underrate both the effects of an author's commitment to his craft (art) and his developing commitment to the terms of his vision if he has one. When he finally arraigns his authors for not having written about *the right things* (on Mencken, pp. 53-4; Lewis, pp. 131-2; Cather, p. 218), or prefers Anderson to them, obviously because he was more broadly involved in the ordinary life of the American people, or forgives "Scott" on some glamour-ground I don't understand, Geismar writes as a critic whose views were determined by the thirties, but it is impossible to take him seriously, and in fact he deserts criticism. He has a mind, too, in which *The Beautiful and Damned* "sticks" but *The Great Gatsby* does not.

Geismar's worst defect, however, is in perspective. His volumes on leading American novelists (this is the second) "will form" he says "a literary record of American thinking over the last century"—and one can only gasp at the impudence. A short summary at the end of this book does indeed mention various poets and philosophers and critics—even six lines of "The Waste Land" are quoted—but the discussion is ridiculous, and Geismar's claim to be an historian of American thought is simply a joke. He is debarred anyway by his provinciality. Referring condescendingly to an essay by Lionel Trilling on Anderson in *The Kenyon Review,* he goes on: "Mr. Trilling is typical of the group of academic critics whose chief interest has been in English literature and who believe they can deal adequately with American writing through such essays or through book reviews." At last we learn why Geismar, who writes worse than most professors, has nothing indispensable to say, and can't integrate books, insists on writing them. American writing is too *noble* to be dealt with in mere essays (such as poor old Dryden used to write) or book reviews (such as Eliot's of Grierson, which

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changed the course of our thought about English poetry for a generation). And keep those Europeans out!—so that Joyce is never mentioned, Mann only when Miss Cather praises him, Yeats only in a quotation from Lewis, Gide only for a phrase, Proust casually twice, the great English and Russian novelists scarcely at all; and when Geismar has to refer to Dante and Swift for standards of intensity he does so in the blankest and most banal way, as a schoolboy might. His allusions to the Eumenides are the last straw. He strikes you as having read with professional care the recent fiction writers of the United States, and some rival critics (especially Van Wyck Brooks and Edmund Wilson, whom he appears to like equally), and nothing else. His title is interesting and rather curious.

John Berryman

POETRY CHRONICLE

A MASQUE OF MERCY. By Robert Frost. Holt. $2.50.
TRIAL OF A POET. By Karl Shapiro. Reynal and Hitchcock. $2.00.
THREE ACADEMIC PIECES. By Wallace Stevens. Cummington Press. $5.00.
THE GOOD EUROPEAN. By R. P. Blackmur. Cummington Press. $5.00
THE BEAUTIFUL CHANGES. By Richard Wilbur. Reynal and Hitchcock. $2.00.

There is a certain satisfaction in being able to say that *A Masque of Mercy* is a bad book, shallow, corny, and unmercifully cute. One wants to be assured that a role like Frost's cannot be played on past seventy without penalty: the platform charm, the public face, the sly hatred of the young, the foreigner, the failure—the otiose revenges of success on the unaccepted. To seem at last somewhat stupid is a just reward. Frost's humor has always appeared a little dull, a little cruel. It is *explicit* to begin with, and his successes are notoriously achieved by a discreet evocation that neither insists nor delimits. But more, Frost's irony is a performance of his embarrassment thinking, formally thinking, I mean, for there is a gentle intelligence in his meters, an implicit wisdom in his melancholy (his true subject is the gentleman farmer's, neither rural nor suburban: *lacrimae rerum,* the Vergilian landscape, half mystery, half morality) that mock his shallow statement. His humorous verse, like his manner of reading aloud, shocks us by suggesting that ultimately his poetry cannot mean as much to him as it may to us. There is a clue, perhaps, to its felt sullenness.

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In praise of Mercy, the hard explicit style, tempered by an old man's self-indulgence, the tenderness one feels for his own bad jokes, is singularly inappropriate; beside the moral complexity of the original Jonah story, this cracker-barrel exegesis seems blasphemously slight. Frost is not at home in this charade (set, unexpectedly in the City—as if he did not quite trust his customary scene for formal wisdom), in this form, though his effects are often dramatic, and an especial tension of his verse arises, I think, from his rejection at the last possible moment of the impulse to divide a whole response into personae; that tension relaxed, we have—bathos.

A Masque of Mercy cannot cohere on the level of language any more than that of thought, for it is flaccid where it means to be easy, cute where it aims at incisiveness. Oh, it wants to *hurt,* before forgiveness, but it can evoke no worthier villain than James Joyce (unnamed) "combining all language in a one-man tongue confusion." And in such a context, what can justice or mercy mean.

I had meant to say before this that Frost is, or was (most of his first-rate work is in the past, but even yet he can produce an occasional lyric with the precise phrasing, the cold clarity of diction, the even-handed mediation between object and meaning that startles us into applause), a magnificent poet, and that I am uneasy thinking so. It would be disingenuous to assert his excellence simply, as if it posed no problems; Frost criticism, with the honorable exception of the recent incisive remarks by Randell Jarrell, lacks essential candor.

Frost has become so inevitably a club in the hands of the near-pharisaical: his ease in the natural landscape, his confident lien on the nineteenth century, his apparent lucidity. "These things are possible after all," they cry to the urban, more difficult poet, to the respecters of failure. "Why not you?" And so there has grown up another Frost, a "case," a reproach, a barricade—that Frost the living man has chosen, between poems, to become. It is only fair, at the moment when he should be inheriting wisdom with age, that the poet be displaced by his chosen Mask, homespun, popular, obtuse.

Don't read these last volumes! The falsifications of success can be verified elsewhere. Leave them to the readers of the *Atlantic Monthly,* the jokers who think Frost invented New England. Sufficient unto the day, etc.

Karl Shapiro is tempted by the possibilities of the success to which Frost is committed. I am not one of those who despise his resolve to "help solidify / The layman's confidence in a plainer art" as a heresy

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against history. The notion that we are predestined to obscurity and alienation by our situation in history has become the central dogma of a new and thoroughly absurd orthodoxy. There is always the example of—Frost! But Shapiro is not enough aware of what Frost also demonstrates: the *dangers* of a wider audience, the dispossession of the poet by his role. Obsessed by the real terror of the "monstrous" toward which the private poet is impelled, he has failed to be scared enough by the equally real terrors of public performance.

Trial of a Poet falls into two parts: two groups of shorter poems, satirical and lyrical, which are essays in the plainer style (several of them have met *The New Yorker*'s standards of lucidity), and the longer title poem, a dramatic descant on the trial of Ezra Pound. Caught in the focus of a treason trial, the sense of guilt that has obsessed our poets and in part cued their choice of the hermetic—we have been, in a sense, waiting for these charges for five hundred years—could certainly justify a poem. But this work betrays by a gross timidity of language the possibilities of its subject. Suggesting that "poetry instructs language only," the poet astonishingly neglects the claims of language in favor of those of comprehensibility; he wants to *tell* everyone what he might have demonstrated for a few. Indeed, the drive to be, at all costs, not misunderstood leads Shapiro in the end to abandon, without formal warrant, his lax verse for a bald prose commentary which explains, with the patient contempt of Hercule Poirot unmasking a murderer, what only the dullest could have missed. Thus his conscience makes Dr. Watsons of us all.

Shapiro seems to be losing patience with the practice of poetry in a consuming desire to make statements about its nature. Such a piece as "Trial of a Poet" seems a commentary, mildly versified in spots, on a poem not written. It is difficult to make theories, in despite of love or wit, the occasions of verse.

Some of the satirical poems in "Recapitulation" are more successful—a certain drollness of rhyme counterpointing the controlled conversational tone; I like the close of "The third-floor thoughts of discontented youth. . . . " But it is difficult to find a set of common values broad enough to make satire available to Shapiro's desired audience; unless, of course, one chooses to ridicule—himself! That is precisely Shapiro's subject: his excursions by Packard among the Proletariat, his not-quite conversion. These are, perhaps, good jokes *en famille,* but I am a little disturbed at the sense in which a "layman" might find him, as poet or ex-radical, laughable. A poem like "The Southerner" manages a more subtle manipulation of values, but it stands alone.

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I miss the flagrant urban baroque of Shapiro's first books, the detailed love of language and the witty landscape of barbershops and moving-vans, disavowed for a programmatic plainness. Shapiro's doctrines, as doctrines, demand a fairer trial, but it should be clear to him, fading toward prose and flatness, that, whatever their validity, they are not for *his* talent fruitful. He has had, at least, the discretion to commit his errors while young.

One turns with relief to that unembarrassed old practitioner, Stevens, turning out for an audience of 246 his elegantly printed fribbles (these pieces have, to be sure, appeared, though not so handsomely, in PR), documenting the shyest of all poetic commitments to seriousness, the brashest of all loves of language. In an omnibus review, one can pause only long enough to salute him.

In R. P. Blackmur there is the complex assurance that a poetry of statement *can* attain elegance, doctrinal meditation on evil reject the offices of prose. There is a lovely tension in adjusting what might be dogma or platitude to a gracefulness worthy of the most trifling nuance of sensibility. There is no *good* reason why a Christian should be a poet—and that is precisely the nub of the infinite possibilities of Christian poetry.

The insistence on the private man ("When public life is all / Then God is mocked") in the public symbol: the Phoenix, the Biblical verse, Yalta, is one with the fact: the Good European trapped in his history, *our* Europe—for it is a proper noun only at our remove. There is a flickering promise in the recurrent Phoenix-image, but it is a problematical Phoenix, a Phoenix at a loss, hope as an aspect of our torment: "When will this dry tree I clutch be done shaking?"

The war moves under the surfaces of all these poets. In Blackmur it most directly compels the forms of his perception: the death of a friend, the revelation of Europe as a metaphor; but even Frost works in among his corny cracks the ancient gag, "There's a war on!" and Shapiro memorializes the quasi-deaths of induction. All three, however, refuse to treat it as an Event; only for the dead is war an absolute experience; for the survivors it is an epiphany of evil, a noise in the street, a "ragging in the mind."

Richard Wilbur, however, is properly a war poet, who has found his matter, his voice, in the war years. And for him, too, whose coming of age is contemporary with the war, it is something which happens to childhood rather than churches, something out of time and internal. Only a few poems in this admirable first book deal directly with the war, and he is likely to touch it, as in "Mined Country," where it impugns the

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innocence of the natural landscape. It is strange how much Nature, in the old open-air sense, possesses Wilbur, to whom that world must belong to Sundays and vacations. The town where it intrudes turns "turnip town"—for he loves the country shapes of vegetables, potato and turnip and eggplant, as he loves the configuration of the "o" and the ampersand, of words like Walgh-Vogel and Giaour, of his invented stanzas. It is, in fact, this candid love of pattern and texture, joined with the discreet use of Marianne Moore as influence, that makes his best poems.

Leslie A. Fiedler

PROS AND CONS

THOMAS WOLFE. By Herbert J. Muller. The Makers of Modern Literature. New Directions. $2.00.

This is a somewhat better book than one might have been led to expect from the seemingly unpromising conjunction of critic and subject. In his past efforts Mr. Muller has not been very effective when dealing with concrete instances of literary art; mostly one thought of him as a critic on the prowl for handy abstractions into which to commit it. In this study, however, he shows himself to be informed by a sense of fidelity to the text and an awareness of the numerous difficulties of judgment and evaluation presented by Wolfe's formidable, ambiguous, and so typically national figure. But Mr. Muller is the victim, none the less, of a contradiction inherent in the task he has set for himself. For, obviously, the very fact of writing a book-length study of an author presupposes a high opinion of him—there is certainly no point in undertaking book-length denigrations of authors. Now Mr. Muller's dilemma is that in reacting to the fact that Wolfe is not in vogue among the intellectuals, he repeats—though in a milder form—so many of their strictures while trying to show that they are mistaken, and he himself enters so many reservations into his own positive appraisal, that the result is not so much a clear estimate of Wolfe's position in American writing as an expert rehearsal of the arguments that have been made for and against his reputation. And while so engaged Mr. Muller commits himself to not a few insupportable notions, such as the notion, divulged with great solemnity, that Wolfe is a mythic artist, a mighty American mythmaker. "The key to Wolfe's achievement is . . . the transformation of a private legend into a public myth," i.e., the myth

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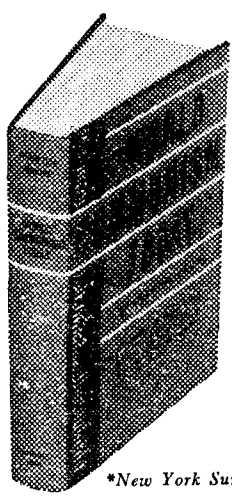
of the national experience. It might be more correct, however, to declare that actually Wolfe transformed a public myth into a private legend. The legend, in all its subjectivity, lives after him, but the myth, as an objective creation, is missing; the frenetic and pathetic search for meaning and value prevents its emergence. This is not to say, of course, that there is no meaningful strain in Wolfe's work, or that he is a negligible figure. There can be no doubt of his genius, but there also can be no doubt that he lacked the intelligence to sustain his genius. The problems that an analyst of Wolfe could profitably deal with are, on the one hand, the relation between biography and fiction and, on the other, the relation between critical intelligence and creative performance. Unfortunately, Mr. Muller concerns himself with these larger problems only in a marginal way. What he mainly attempts to do is to secure for Wolfe a safe place in the hierarchy of modern letters. The attempt is premature.

P. R.



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CORRESPONDENCE

DISAGREEMENT WITH KURT LIST

Sirs:

The Music Chronicle in your January issue is a remarkable performance of drum-beating. In this exposition by Kurt List, the drums are pounded tirelessly for atonal polyphonic music. "Polyphony," we are informed, "is a higher musical art form." The grand climax is: "But if music is to exist as an artistic expression of modern America, atonal polyphony is really the only valid guide." It is as simple as all that, really?

No one can object to any music lover's or composer's predilection for atonal polyphony. At least that is true in this country, for in Soviet Russia, such a preference would bode ill for any composer. . . . In this country it is not forbidden. As your music chronicler points out, the musical audience, of its own free will and accord, debased by the effects of modern industrialism and a combination of Mozart, Schubert, Wagner, and Beethoven, stays away from performances of atonal music in droves. There is little purpose served in disputing over musical tastes. I know someone who was firmly of the opinion that no great music had been written except prior to the year 1800. I have given up arguing the question with him for quite some while, after having been successful in pushing forward the date of music's demise by only a few years. I couldn't see how pushing forward the date another twenty years was worth all that effort. By contrast, I have another friend, who has been a student of music for the past twenty years and has played the piano very well since an early age, and who is also an ardent admirer of Arnold Schönberg's atonal polyphonic music. My friend has even written his Opus 1, No. 1, for the piano in atonal polyphonic style. Being unwilling to permit this creative work to languish unheard, I suggested that he arrange to play it for me. To my astonishment he said: "Play it for you? It is entirely too difficult for me to play. But I think I know someone who might be able to get through it." I have been waiting for two months. . . .

In the case of your music chronicler, therefore, I have no desire to enter into any dispute as to his particular fondness for atonal polyphony. But to contend that it is the "only valid guide" to artistic expression in music today is carrying fondness into the realm of prejudice, and from there to doctrinairism. Not even Arnold Schönberg, in his writings on music and composition, carries things that far. But in the case of the doctrinaire, all composers who refuse to comply are condemned out of hand. All composers, present and future, who refuse to see the true atonal polyphonic path, face the threat of the critical whip. And all the great composers of the past who failed to have the foresight to comply in advance are heaped with scorn. Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven, deprived of this all-essential guide to musical creation, we are informed, declined into "cliché effects." Schumann and Mendelssohn were often "quite vulgar." "Cliché" is a term used repeatedly by your critic for music not written according to the atonal guidebook. Such American composers as Thomson, Copland, and Barber are viewed with disfavor primarily from the point of view of their rejection of the atonal doctrine. Even composers who do write atonally, such as Sessions and Ives, are criticized because they have the temerity to deviate from the true path. I doubt whether anyone could find a critical approach so narrow and rigid in the history of musical criticism.

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It is extremely questionable whether Virgil Thomson, Copland, or Barber, whatever their shortcomings may be, would become better composers by switching over to atonal polyphonic music. They would, in all likelihood, become much worse. To urge or insist that composers write in a style entirely foreign to them is neither the role of a critic, or the way in which musical creation is fostered or developed. Shostakovich, on orders from Stalin to produce music which could be whistled, then proceeded to comply. If his music previously had been difficult to whistle, the music that he produced subsequently wasn't worth the price of a whistle. In spite of List's strictures, composers will continue, I hope, to write as they please.

Donald Tovey, the well-known British writer on music, says that this type of critic was disposed of once and for all by Plato (would that it were so!) by referring to an artist who, arguing that purple is the most beautiful of all colors and the eye the most beautiful of human features, proceeded to paint the eyes of all statues purple.

Your critic surveys the entire field of music looking for purple eyes—that is, for polyphonic passages. For example, the adherence to polyphony by Mozart in the last movement of the *Jupiter Symphony* and by Beethoven in his last quartets, receives his commendation. Does Kurt List think that the first three movements of the *Jupiter Symphony* are any less extraordinary than the last movement, or that *Don Giovanni,* which is written in non-polyphonic style, is any inferior to Mozart's polyphonic works? Does he think that the *C Sharp Minor Quartet* of Beethoven which opens with a magnificent fugue, then declines in the other six movements into "romantic clichés"? . . .

Another feature of your Music Chronicle is the peculiar type of pseudo-Marxist "profundity" which always attempts to explain some movement in art or music by referring to a presumed economic basis from which it is supposed to stem. List points out that the rise of industrialism coincided with the romantic movement in music. Just how much of a rise of industrialism there was in Austria in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, and just how much this had to do with the romantic music created by Weber and Schubert is extremely debatable. And why the same industrial progress produced such vastly different composers as Brahms, Wagner, Verdi, and Franck simultaneously is impossible to discern.

To argue from the artistic movement to the so-called economic basis is bad enough, but when List, in addition, argues from the economic substratum to the type of music which ought to result therefrom, then we go into the realm of fantasy twice-compounded. It is thus that he polemicizes for atonal polyphony as adequately expressing "the neurotic aspects of modern life." Just why the complicated character of modern life, including its neurotic aspects, cannot be expressed by many different styles of musical composition is not at all clear. Moreover, neurotic aspects are not peculiar to our times alone, but are to be found in all periods, although our statistics and our awareness of the problem are better today than they once were. I would sincerely urge all music critics to stay away from industrial and economic interpretations of art that interpret nothing in actuality, no matter how temptingly profound they may appear to be. . . .

Bernard Herman

Forest Hills, N. Y.

REPLY

Sirs:

Mr. Herman seems to make three basic points: (1) I reject all music of any age and any style that is not polyphonic, (2) I link social with musical

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events in a manner that cannot be proved by historical facts, (3) I "demand" a specific style from composers, and, by doing so, am injecting a Stalinist note into the musical world.

These points Mr. Herman substantiates with a documentation which is either born of ignorance or deliberate misinformation. (In passing, the following at least should be established. Schönberg in his writings, e.g., *Harmonielehre,* makes very clear where the responsibility of the modern composer lies. . . . Sessions never wrote a single piece of atonal music. . . . Weber is not mentioned in my article at all and has certainly nothing to do with Austria.)

As to point one, my fundamental point of argument is that each musical epoch sets specific challenges for every composer, and he can only write valid music in meeting those challenges. The expanse of non-polyphonic music in the age of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven was such a challenge, and that is why these composers wrote great music. The attenuation of their styles through another age is an anachronism and a regression. Instead of solving an aesthetic problem, such a drawing-out only repeats what has become commonplace in spite of its admirable point of departure.

As to point two, one need not be a Marxist to realize that man and his ideas are formed in part by social and economic movements. The undeniable existence of one fundamental style in specific periods—polyphony in the Baroque, the *style galant* in the Rococo —points strongly to the influence of a social basis—whether it is called economic structure or *Zeitgeist.* This basis, of course, is not the only factor in musical composition, which is why each composer has an idiom of his own.

As to point three, to recognize the challenge of one's own period is an important task of the critic. It does not imply the demand for physical extinction of the less serious composers.

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Nor does it mean any one musician must immediately transform his musical style or personality. If one makes a basic criticism of, say, Steinbeck, one is not necessarily telling him to write like Proust or Kafka. (I assume Mr. Herman recognizes the difference of effect between an article in PARTISAN REVIEW and one in *Pravda*.)

Those composers and conductors who control our musical life—and of whom Mr. Herman is one—have consistently kept the music of Schönberg and his school off the repertory. When called to support this position they have said nothing more pertinent than Mr. Herman, rejecting the music on the shamelessly nonmusical grounds that it is doctrinaire, "prejudiced," even un-American. The virulence and irrelevance of their attack suggests that they are uneasy about their own position.

Kurt List

New York City

SARTRE'S THESIS

Sirs:

. . . I found it quite hard to grasp hold of Sartre's thesis about poetry [in "What is Writing?" in the January number] firmly enough to criticize it, for so many of his affirmations are negated in the article itself. But after much reflection I braced myself to consider these negations as contradictions, pure and simple, although Sartre is an eminent thinker. Let me give a few examples. Sartre declares straightaway that it is an absurdity to discuss one art in terms of another because their form and matter are different. But a page or so later he decides that painting, poetry, and music should be grouped together in opposition, as it were, to prose, or simple writing. Then again he maintains quite hotly that sounds, colors, and forms are not signs, and therefore carry no weight of signification. In other words, a painting or a statue (and he soon adds a poem)

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cannot represent any conceptual things, but are merely objects to our senses, "things" in the world of things. This is the argument for their immunity from being engaged. But Sartre admits that sounds, etc., carry a *small* degree of signification. What are the limits? Where does negligible meaning stop, and real begin? Is not rather the use to which potentially significant materials are directed that which transforms them into signifying entities? It seems to me precisely that utilization of raw elements like sounds or words to form meaningful structures is the artist's activity.

For Sartre's description a new human psychology must be inferred. This in itself is not damning, but the form it must take does rather frighten one. We must suppose that each material difference among the arts possesses a corresponding human, nonconceptual faculty geared only to the reception and "understanding" (if we may temporarily call it that) of works executed in that particular medium. Thus, sculpture and its appeal would have a separate faculty than either painting or photography, and so on, perhaps all the way to a distinction between the water-color sense-faculty of the brain (or soul) and the oil or the tempera. But, less playfully, in the case of poetry we should have to suppose a process, mental or otherwise, for the absorption of *words* which is distinct from that process by which we absorb words as *symbols*. I can think only of the old punishment of *eating* them. . . .

Only harm can come from withdrawing poetry out of the reach of rational discourse. Musicians, or rather, music lovers have almost destroyed the possibility of anyone writing well about music in the excess of their esoteric attitude. The same should not be the fate of poetry. It is always necessary, when faced with an artistic achievement, to characterize it. Never completely, of course, for that is where the distinctness of medium comes in, but to some extent. And it cannot be denied that successful critics have always done exactly that, a particularly distinguished tradition of criticism belonging, in fact, to Sartre's own country. It is hard to accept his vituperation against critics in the light of this, but the article contains much in the way of specific reference which is no doubt lost to an American reader. . . .

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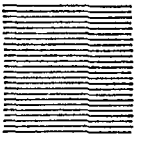

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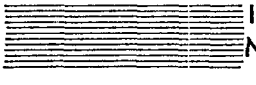

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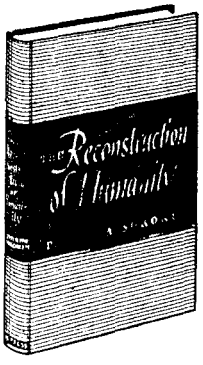

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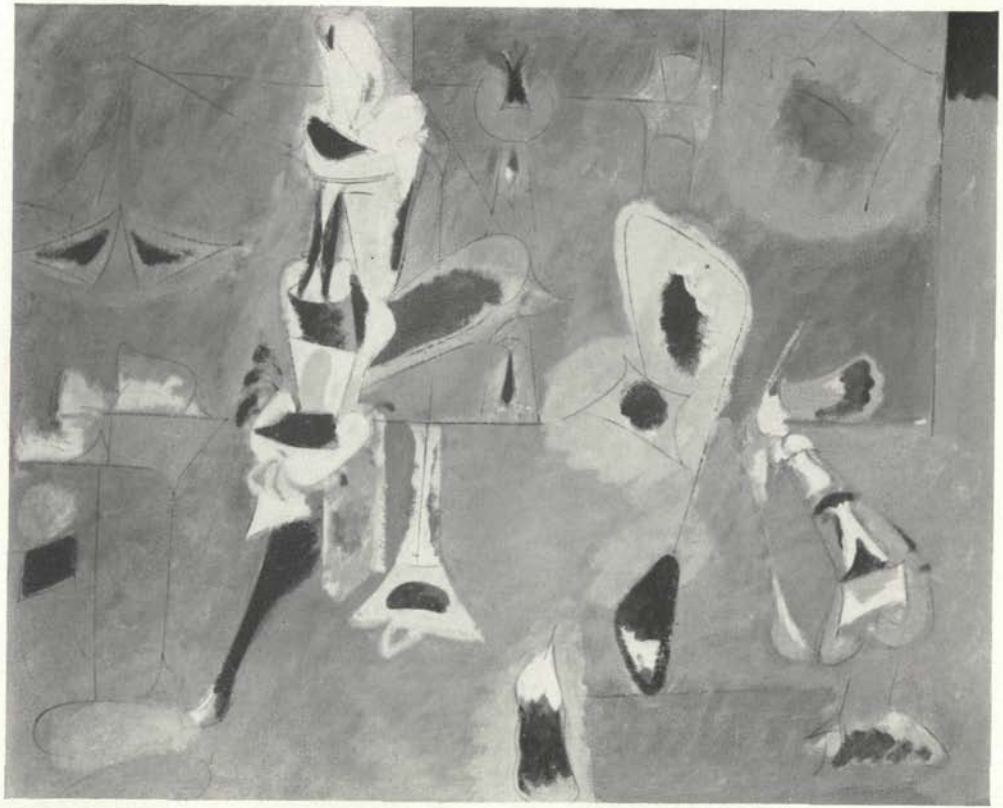

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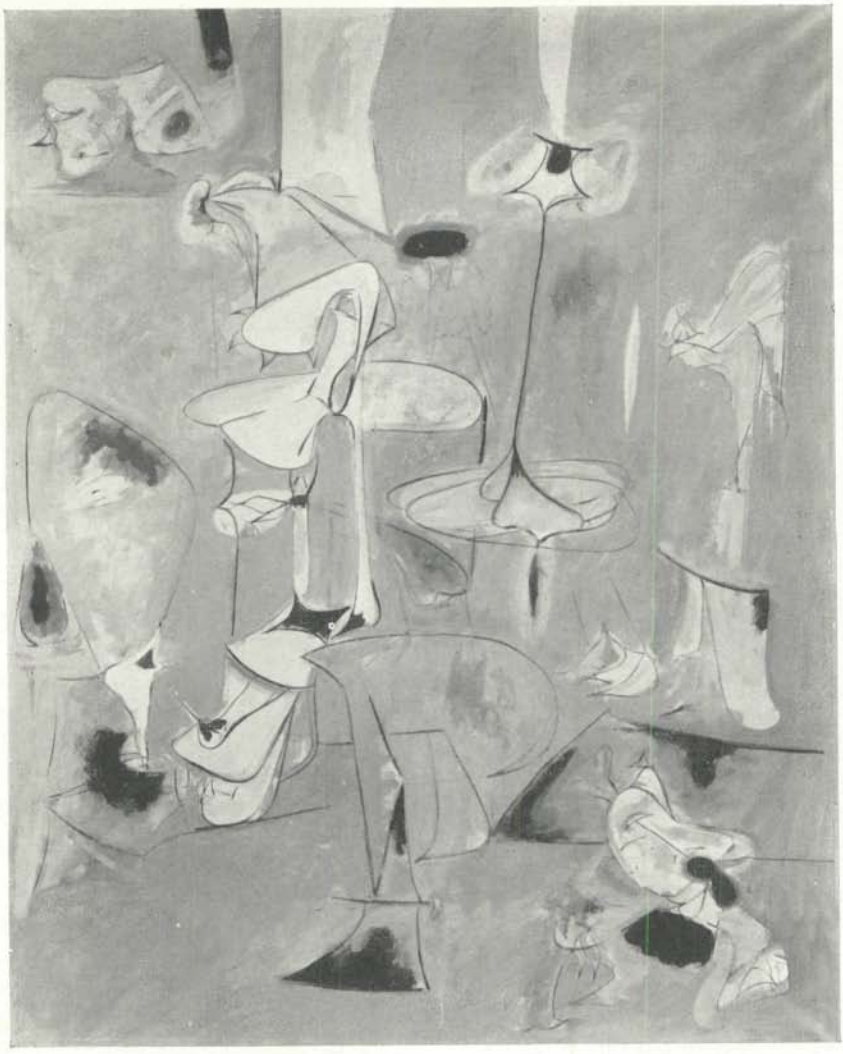

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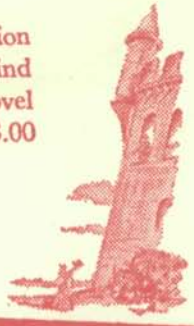

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